Minutes of the Sixty-Sixth Meeting
Central Committee of the World Council of Churches
9-15 February 2022
Video Conference

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1. Plenary Session 9 February

On behalf of the leadership of the World Council of Churches central committee, the moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya), welcomed the members and other participants to the online meeting of the WCC central committee. She hoped all would feel at home, even though the meeting was held online.

1.1. Opening Prayer, Wednesday 9 February

The central committee participants gathered online to take part in a common prayer which was led by Bossey students from the chapel of the Ecumenical Centre. Following the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, this week the community prayed for and with the people and churches of Andorra, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain and Vatican City. Rev. Dr Susan Durber (United Reformed Church), moderator of Faith and Order Commission, offered a reflection on John 17:20-26. She emphasized that this well-known text on unity actually concludes with love: Jesus speaks to God, praying that 'the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.' The theme of the coming Assembly shows how close unity and love really are, and how vital they are for the life of the Church and the world. Facing such deep challenges as one world and one Church, unity and love, being bound together, are vital. She urged the body to receive the gift of love, to make us one. The challenges were too strong for a divided Church. The love of God, expressed and known in unity, had already overcome the world.

1.2. Agenda and Conduct of Meeting

The moderator asked Mr Douglas Chial, director of the office of the general secretariat, to present the agenda and conduct for the meeting.

The agenda was focussed on strengthening the fellowship, preparing for the assembly and new member churches. The annotated agenda had a link to the documentation and discussion site. The Overview of Matters for Referral and Decision included a short summary of every document and suggested action.

The agenda of the meeting included two days of hearing sessions in plenary, two days of committee work, a day for prayer and rest, followed by two days of decision sessions in plenary. Regional meetings took place at different times on Thursday and Friday. Every session opened and closed with prayer.

The central committee was prepared in accordance with WCC rule 8.8, which provides for meetings using electronic communication. Like all meetings of the WCC, consensus decision-making procedures were used. Members and presidents could use their orange and blue indicator cards to show the moderator how they feel about what was being proposed.

Some adaptations to the usual practice of an in-person central committee meeting had been made. To request to speak, participants should use the 'raise hand' button. If called on by the moderator, participants were asked to turn on the microphone, state their name, church and the language they were using. All were asked to speak slowly and limit interventions to one minute. Anyone could contribute to the discussion by using the chat.

If there was a procedural proposal, “PROPOSAL” should be typed in capital letters in the chat and sent to everyone. For points of order, one should turn on the microphone and say “point of order”.

All meetings would be recorded for internal use only.

Mr Chial was thanked for his presentation.

1.3. Opening Actions

1.3.1. Approval of agenda

The committee members were asked to approve the agenda for the meeting. The agenda was approved by consensus.

1.3.2. Roll call and seating of substitutes

Because the meeting was online, time was not taken for a traditional roll call. The acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca confirmed that quorum was reached with 108 members and presidents present. He presented the substitutes and replacements (see Appendix 1) to the central committee for action. The substitutes and replacements were approved by consensus.

1.3.3. Approval of standing committee membership

The moderator referred the members to the list of standing committees (GEN 04), including Communication, Finance Policy, Governance and Nominations, Policy Reference and Programme committees. She noted that there would be no Public Issues committee because there was not enough time to process public statements. Changes to committee membership could be sent to the secretariat. The standing committee leadership and membership was approved by consensus.

1.3.4. Approval of minutes (June 2021)

The committee was referred to the minutes of the June 2021 central committee online meeting which had been posted on the documentation site in January. No comments or corrections were received. The minutes were approved by consensus.

The opening actions were completed.

1.4. Moderator’s Address

Before beginning her address, Dr Abuom shared that the leadership of the central committee (LCC) at their last meeting, felt it would be helpful to also hear from others during the time allocated for the moderator’s address. This would include the vice-moderator, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (United Methodist Church) and Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland), programme committee moderator and co-moderator of the host committee for the assembly in Germany.

Bishop Swenson recalled how inspiring the thematic plenaries at Busan had been for her as a first-time delegate to the assembly in 2013. The central committee then began their

pilgrimage of justice and peace the year after. She had participated in several pilgrimages including one to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to acknowledge 70 years since the dropping of the atomic bombs and mourn the loss. At that the time the WCC reaffirmed its commitment to speak out against nuclear proliferation. Pilgrimages also took place to the Korean Peninsula for peace and reunification, to Palestine and Israel to pray for peace in the Middle East and plant olive trees. The executive committee was invited to hold its meeting in Jordan (2017) with a focus on peace in the region. There was a pilgrimage in North America to accompany the churches and people in addressing racism. The hosting of the central committee in Trondheim, Norway (2016) was particularly meaningful for the bishop as she got to know the Sami people and understand her own church's history in protecting Jews during the Holocaust in that country. The executive had also gone to Armenia (2015), Cyprus (2014), China (2016) and Sweden (2018), invited by the member churches to understand their situations – current and historical – and to participate in building peace and justice. In preparation for the Karlsruhe Assembly, we continue to walk together in justice and peace even as the theme of Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity, was an inspiration. The worldwide pandemic required a re-focus on health and well-being and on how to assist people to be safe and healthy. Christ's love now moves us as a fellowship to move and to act in love as we give thanks for what we have done and look forward to a future of reconciliation and unity leading everyone towards abundant life for all of God's children in every place.

Bishop Bosse-Huber shared some of her hopes and expectations for the assembly in Karlsruhe. She hoped for a real encounter, more important than ever since the pandemic. The churches in Europe needed encounters with churches from all over the world, to help look at the role of churches from different perspectives. She hoped for impulses for the faith and a testimony for justice and peace, for hope and for confidence. She expected the assembly to give a boost for the ecumenical movement in Europe and in Germany. She hoped that the assembly and its witness for strengthening unity would help the churches in Europe to be consistent with their theology and more courageous in the multi-lateral cooperation with different churches on the ground. She also hoped that the assembly would help strengthen the role of the churches in society. The preparations for the assembly show that the secular, cultural and political institutions in Germany were interested in the assembly. They recognized that the churches and other faith bodies were multipliers and drivers of social development. She hoped that the assembly would be a wake-up call for the whole world, which was currently being challenged in terms of cohesion by the current COVID-19 pandemic. The assembly could witness to the whole world that in this time of vulnerability it was only by being and working together that a peaceful and just society could be built. The assembly could be a living testimony of unity, justice and peace. She hoped the assembly in Karlsruhe would dare to walk the path of justice and peace, towards true reconciliation and visible unity.

Dr Abuom greeted the central committee members, presidents, advisors and staff and the wider ecumenical movement following online. The focus of her comments was on letting go and allowing Christ to take the centre stage. The assembly theme is "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." For Christ's love to move anyone, one had to let go of historical baggage of conflict and division and allow Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to change attitudes, values and character in order to generate and sustain momentum for reconciliation and unity. The theme had reenergized our spirituality, out spiritual and prayer life.

She said that, since Busan, the pilgrimage of justice and peace had shown us more possibilities for action expressed by Christ's love. Moving together on the pilgrimage the fellowship had raised critical voices, noted differences but still stayed together. New energies and ideas had been received as we moved from place to place. The theology developed through the pilgrimage of justice and peace had been encouraging, motivating and had provided some level of institutional identification. Many more people now recognized the work of WCC through the work of justice and peace. Many member churches and those of other faiths now recognized the spiritual life of the WCC. WCC could lift our fellowship identity and vision for unity without fear of contradiction.

She felt that the COVID-19 pandemic had had some positive effects. During this time the creativity and innovation of the member churches and WCC secretariat was made evident. Worship and fellowship became central to the vision that "we are called to be one". She expressed gratefulness to the WCC staff, especially the communications department, who had shouldered these difficult moments in maintaining spirituality and keeping our life and fellowship together. She encouraged the member churches to train more Christian communicators, to ensure the validity and authenticity of our message to the world.

She returned to the themes of letting go and encouraged the central committee to reflect together during this meeting on what we need to let go of and what we need to move forward with. A test for the community, for the central committee was whether we could let go some of those things we cherished so much, so that we depend on God. This could be difficult but was an exercise of trust – trust in God, trust in what we are doing together. She anticipated that the central committee, at this meeting, would be able to let go and hold together. What might seem so precious, so critical and so important, might not be that which takes us forward to Karlsruhe. As the fellowship moved to the assembly, with Christ in our midst, we could pronounce and proclaim to the world that Christs' love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

The full Moderator's Address is recorded in Appendix 2.

1.5. Report of the Acting General Secretary

The acting general secretary, Father Ioan Sauca, was invited to present his report. He began by thanking the leadership of the central committee for their accompaniment and wisdom in providing direction.

He said he found the commitment and resilience of the churches to continue their ministry and diaconal service to all God's people to be inspiring and transformative in this time of great loss, physical separation, and increased vulnerability and injustice. He commended the WCC governing bodies, committees, commissions, working groups, advisory groups and ecumenical networks which had all continued to function with inspired commitment and resilience. We had made this more visible through monthly accountability reports to the central committee and also through new technologies, webinars and other ways of sharing our work and witness with the world. The pandemic had not only reinforced the experience of our shared vulnerability, but also our community as human beings, our solidarity across divides and borders, and our capacity for empathy, understanding, and even sacrifice.

He described the WCC as a spiritually-based organization. The heart of our fellowship was the ecumenical spirituality we shared, and this spiritually inspired work of the WCC had a much broader reach. It aimed to achieve the unity of Christians and of all creation and overcome divisions to serve all humanity in its quest for justice and peace. Over the past two years the importance of speaking with a spiritual language in WCC statements and speeches had been made clear. This was a language that people in the churches could identify with but which was also recognized by people in other faith communities. As we spoke to one another as people of faith, we discovered that we had something in common that brings us closer.

He highlighted some visits to member churches he had made in recent months since travel had become possible. Even with the challenges there were signs of hope. An invitation to Syria and Lebanon had been received and a pastoral visit was being planned to visit the churches in Syria and worship together in Damascus.

Since the last assembly, together with the climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic had been a strong and brutal reminder that human beings belong to creation and had been given the mandate to care for it. The pandemic had exacerbated existing inequalities and exposed still further existing structural injustice. The 11th WCC Assembly would need to address this situation and speak to the world in clear and direct ways that all might understand. He concluded in the hope that as we journeyed to Karlsruhe and beyond the WCC 11th Assembly, our pilgrimage would continue as a response to God's amazing love for all creation and that the love and compassion of Christ would inspire the churches' commitment to reconciliation and unity, for the whole human family.

The full report is recorded in Appendix 3.

Members were invited to comment on the reports presented. Bishop Mary Ann Swenson thanked the moderator, the acting general secretary and Bishop Bosse-Huber for their reports. She appreciated how Fr Ioan had described the WCC as a spiritually-based organization and found this particularly meaningful. She felt that all the comments were helpful for the central committee as we began our time together.

The moderator added her thanks, especially for the signs of hope and the expectations for the assembly.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) also expressed her gratitude to those who had reported. It was helpful to know that we were on our way to Karlsruhe and that we were exploring the theme of love as heard in the sermon earlier. WCC was a fellowship with a rich spirituality although we lived in hard times and COVID was a struggle for many churches and our fellowship. The messages of hope and love on the pilgrimage were encouraging.

Sofie Camnerin (Uniting Church in Sweden) thanked the speakers for reminding us why we walked together and reminding us of our history and our urgent need for unity and love.

Dr Fransina Yoteni (Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua [GKITP]) expressed that the church and people in West Papua felt how deeply the theme of the assembly was also affecting and working out in their lives. She thanked the WCC for the pastoral visit to Indonesia and to West Papua and especially to the acting general secretary for delivering a message during the mission day of her church earlier this month. Spirituality was a source of strength so that we could move forward despite the difficult situation.

Many members added their comments and appreciation for the reports presented in the chat. Some also expressed thanks for the opportunity to visit Lebanon and Syria and hope for a possible pastoral visit to Russia and Ukraine.

The moderator thanked the members for their input.

1.6. Report of the Executive Committee

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a hearing session. He invited the vice-moderator, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, to present the report of the executive committee. She described the four meetings that had taken place since the last central committee in June 2021. The executive committee had met online in July 2021 to establish a process of monitoring the impact of the pandemic as we planned for the assembly. This process had continued, in cooperation with the hosts in Germany. That meeting also reviewed the 2021 financial results and revised the 2021 budget, adapting to the impacts of COVID-19.

The next meeting took place in November 2021 in-person at Bossey. Since it was the first time meeting in-person since the pandemic broke out, it was very special. During the meeting there was a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, with students, faculty and friends of Bossey. The executive committee carried out its usual business of approving programme plans and budgets for the following year as well as confirming assembly delegations naming additional delegates. The committee also approved an assembly budget (2018-2023), discussed the Green Village project and approved a strategy for land sale of Kyoto and Stockholm. Public issues statements were issued by the executive committee on the COP 26, Ethiopia, recent developments in Palestine and Israel, coups in Myanmar and Sudan and on the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.

The executive committee online meeting in January 2022 was called to discern and decide how best to prepare for and hold the central committee meeting in February. The survey and responses from the members assisted in that discernment. After much discussion and with regret, the executive committee decided to hold the central committee meeting online rather than in-person as the COVID situation worldwide was still a challenge for many of the members in terms of travelling.

The executive had also met the day before the current central committee meeting and forwarded several matters to the central committee for action:

- Draft unity statement for the assembly – the executive encouraged the members to add their comments and suggestions to the discussion portal by 28 February;
- Membership matters – together with PCCC, the executive recommended that the central committee receive two churches – The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) and the

Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa – as WCC member churches according to Rule I.5 and invite delegates to assembly; the executive also recommended that the central committee recognize continued membership of the Anglican Province of Alexandria and invite delegates to the assembly;
- Assembly leadership and plenary speakers.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked Bishop Swenson for presenting the report and opened the floor for questions and comments.

Dr Audeh Quawas (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem) asked, in regard to the Green Village project, whether the sale of land, as mentioned in the report, was already approved. Ms Elaine Dykes, finance director, was asked to respond.

Ms Dykes confirmed that selling land was part of the Green Village project, in order to meet the project objectives. A new decision on strategy had been taken concerning the Stockholm plot. The executive committee had asked that a study be done for the Stockholm plot for a possible land lease. This approach could have been an advantageous way to obtain regular income from this part of the project rather than a capital amount, which would be realised in the sale of the land and the project. Market studies were conducted over a number of months, along with a legal analysis of two additional complexities of land lease for that project, being firstly, the sale by floors of a building, and, secondly, the Geneva international zone criteria in requiring that the land also be owned by international organizations, NGOs or missions to the UN. The recommendations from the steering committee arising from these studies, as well the market pressure on pricing for the Kyoto sale led the executive committee to decide on sale of the land rather than a land lease as the strategy for that particular plot. She referred the committee to the Update on Green Village which described the current market interest in the Stockholm project and the parties who had expressed the possibility to obtain an offer for individual floors. She added that a building permit for that part of the site had not yet been obtained that that the transactions under discussion would not take place for several years yet.

Dr Quawas thanked her for the information. He stated that he disagreed with selling land as part of the Green Village project as this meant losing a very profitable asset for WCC and a possibility for income generation in the future. He asked that the finance policy committee take his objection into consideration. Bishop Swenson, a member of the steering committee and the finance policy committee, affirmed that this would be discussed in the standing committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the committee for the discussion and said that the Report of the Executive Committee was referred to all standing committees for discussion.

1.7. Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration

Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), co-moderator of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (PCCC), was invited to present the report from the most recent meeting of the PCCC. The PCCC had met three times since the central committee meeting in 2018. The reports of the 2019 and 2020 meetings were available to the central committee.

He invited Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece), a member of the PCCC, to speak about the role of the permanent committee. This unique committee was a guardian of consensus carrying the dynamics of the Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC. It had seven members from the Orthodox church family and seven from other families represented in the WCC membership. The PCCC offered advice in how to continue growing into the vision of being a fellowship of churches. It served through the next assembly and to the first full meeting of the central committee and as such offered stability in a time of transition for the Council.

The most important means to promote consensus were patient discussion and profound listening. We were developing practices to strengthen the ethos of consensus. For this reason the PCCC appreciated the efforts of the assembly planning committee to facilitate consensus discernment in the preparations of the assembly. The central committee was asked to approve a consensus facilitation team for training leadership for the assembly and orienting the assembly delegates on the first day of the assembly.

The PCCC also worked on membership matters including the applicant churches as well as other aspects of members, as was mentioned in the amendments to the rules proposed for this meeting. The committee also addressed theological issues and recommends that the PCCC should also discuss the responses from the churches to "The Church: Towards a Common Vision" document from the Faith and Order Commission, and reflect on their implications for the life of the fellowship.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa) said that it was important that long time members of WCC governing bodies gave a chance to other churches to serve. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios affirmed the remarks but also said that continuity in WCC bodies was also important. Bishop Peura confirmed that continuity was valuable for carrying out the work.

Bishop Peura added that comments or suggestions could be posted on the discussion forum or sent to the policy reference committee email. The report of the permanent committee was referred to the policy reference committee.

1.8. Report of the Working Group on Constitution and Rules (GEN FIN 04)

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios invited Ms Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East), moderator of the working group, to present the report of the Working Group on Constitution and Rules. The group had been appointed by the central committee in 2018 and had worked since then. At the central committee meeting in June 2021 the mandate was extended to include work on meetings and decision-making by electronic means, given the experiences of the global pandemic and its restriction on travel and in-person meetings. She thanked the central committee members involved as well as the acting general secretary and staff for accompanying and facilitating the work.

The intention had been to clarify language, more clearly identify responsibility and authority, respond to evaluations and referred matters, and adapt the rules to the changing context.

She focused on several recommendations for changes that had particular significance for the fellowship.

While not by any means a perfect replacement for meeting in person, **electronic meetings** with the improvements in the platforms for video conferencing, broader global access to technology, and experience with various approaches had demonstrated the opportunities, even while some challenges remained. Proposed amendments to the rules for electronic meetings were designed to increase flexibility, normalize quorum and participation requirements, and clarify procedures while still privileging in person meetings in some contexts, when possible. The proposals for the rules made no provision for meetings in which some participants are present in person, and some are participating electronically. According to the proposals, meetings would be designated as “in-person” or “electronic” in advance, with agendas formed and quorum assured according to that designation.

Term limits for members of the executive committee were introduced in advance of the Busan assembly. The same period saw the introduction of elections for executive committee at the middle of each eight-year period from assembly to assembly. The working group grappled with several issues in these related provisions. Two different proposals for executive committee term limits were presented to the central committee for decision as the working group and the executive committee differed in their approaches to the matter.

In response to questions regarding the standing, composition and roles of various advisory and consultative groups, proposals had been included that elaborate the distinctions among the various bodies, and address the formation and roles of **consultative, reference and advisory groups** and their relationships to the Council.

There were no amendments proposed for sections relating to the **search for and election of the general secretary**. The current process was ongoing and given the confidentiality of the search process, the pending report, and sensitivity of the matter, the working group had deferred this important work to follow completion of the process.

The working group hoped this work could soon be concluded, but recognized that the detail of the documents and need for full discussion of at least some of the proposals would make action on the documents during an electronic meeting difficult. For this reason the group recommended that the decision on the proposed amendments to the rules and to the supplement to the rules be deferred till an in-person meeting of the central committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked Ms Glynn-Mackoul and the working group for the presentation and the work done and opened the floor for discussion.

Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland) appreciated the work done. With regard to reference and advisory groups, up till now that was the responsibility of the general secretary to whom the group was responsible. He asked about the rationale for the proposal to change this practice.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul appreciated him highlighting this issue. In the supplement to the rules there was a new section which described the different kinds of committees and groups. The

idea for these additional clarifications and proposals was not to take away responsibilities of the general secretary and the responsibility for advisory groups remained in that office. It was thought that the reference groups, following major themes or programmatic areas, had particular significance and therefore the governing bodies should participate in setting the frameworks for such groups, even as the general secretary may be the one proposing the group.

In relation to term limits for executive committee members, Dr Enns recalled long discussions on this topic and that there was a strong feeling in central committees to encourage wider participation from the churches on the committee. He was glad for the work done on making the rules clearer on this subject but wanted to remind the central committee of the previous discussions and would not want to go back on previous decisions.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul said that it should be noted that the original language for the executive committee members was two terms. The group realized that "term" was understood in two different ways, i.e. four-year and eight-year terms. For this reason the group proposed clarifying "term" as meaning four years. It was felt that a workable solution should be found that would respond to the need for rotation as well as continuity. The discussion centred on the issue of whether the rule should limit the person to serving three four-year terms and never again or rather three consecutive terms after which a time off would be necessary. This was an issue for the central committee to discuss and discern the best way forward.

Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Cilicia]) asked about the relation of these proposals to the mid-term rotation of the executive committee. Ms Glynn-Mackoul responded that nothing had changed from the usual practice that a nominations committee works from the names of the central committee and proposed an executive committee. There was no proposal to change the rules around the mid-term election. This practice allowed for more churches to be represented on the executive committee between assemblies. There was also no change in the fact that some regions and some church families agreed among themselves proposals for executive committee. The current proposals on term limits did not change any of the current practices but put an expectation of continuity and a kind of permanent rotation.

Dr Audeh Quawas, a member of the working group on constitution and rules, added that this proposal on term limits had nothing to do with the rotation. He said that, as a principle, for any institution's rules, one cannot put obstacles to nominating bodies on whom they could name. He clarified that if the word "consecutive" was not used then one blocked the church from naming someone who served previously on the executive committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim thanked Ms Glynn-Mackoul for the presentation but said that the working group had not suggested improvements for the election of the search committee for a new general secretary. In addition he stated that the central committee had not adhered to the rules governing the election process because of the pandemic.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul stated that the working group intentionally chose not to work on this section of the rules and supplement to the rules. The fact that no changes were proposed did not indicate that the working group felt that no amendments were necessary for the

improvement of this process. Rather working group decided not to work on this matter due to the confidentiality of the process, the fact that the working group and the search committee shared members and the sensitivity of the ongoing process. A recommendation was made by the working group that the governing bodies addressed these sections in the rules and supplement to the rules as soon as possible following the election. The working group also came to the conclusion that because of the need for confidentiality and secret ballots, pursuing an election through and electronic meeting would not be possible at this time and that the election should take place at an in-person meeting.

Rev. James Bhagwan (Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma) offered his greetings from the Pacific and asked that in terms of online meetings it be kept in mind that the Pacific was very often at a disadvantage due to time zones. He hoped that for electronic meetings some solidarity could be expressed through a rotation of meeting times. There were many areas in the global fellowship where internet connectivity was still limited.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul encouraged the central committee members to send comments to the online discussion forum. The report was referred to the governance and nominations committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the moderator of the working group and those who had added their comments to the session.

1.9. Closing remarks

Dr Agnes Abuom, thanked H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios for moderating the session, those involved in preparing and presenting the reports and the central committee members who effectively engaged in the discussion and through the chat. Recalling the sermon that began the meeting, she reminded the meeting that the challenges of today's world are too much for a divided fellowship.

1.10. Closing Prayer with In Memoriam (INF 03), Wednesday 9 February

The closing prayer was in the form of an In Memoriam (Appendix 4). Those in the ecumenical family who had passed on to be with the Lord since the last meeting of the central committee in June 2021 were named during the prayer.

2. Plenary Session 10 February

The moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes, Abuom, welcomed the committee members to the second day of the meeting. Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session.

2.1. Opening Prayer, Thursday 10 February

The morning prayer was led by staff and Bossey students. The Gospel reading was John 4:5-26 about Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well.

2.2. Review of agenda and conduct for meeting

Mr Douglas Chial reminded the body of the day's agenda and conduct for the meeting. The moderator added that the time was limited and asked the members to be brief in their interventions.

2.3. Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

Bishop Swenson said that the pilgrimage of justice and peace (PJP) had been so important since the Busan Assembly. It had brought us closer together as a fellowship and had strengthened our work for God's justice and peace. The reference group had done good work on the PJP in guiding us on the pilgrimage. She then invited the co-moderator of the reference group on the pilgrimage of justice and peace, Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns, to share some of the lessons learned on our pilgrim way.

Dr Enns thanked the group for the opportunity to present to the central committee. He expressed greetings and regrets from the other co-moderator, Mrs Jennifer P. Martin (United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands), who could not be present at this meeting. He also thanked the reference group members, the members of the theological study group and the staff, under the leadership of the deputy general secretary, Prof. Dr Isabel Awawo Phiri, for all the good work since Busan.

During the pilgrimage the fellowship had become companions (those who share bread along the way) on the way. He reminded the committee of some of the descriptors of the PJP at the beginning of the pilgrimage:

- A transformative journey that God invited us to in anticipation of the final purpose for the world that the Triune God brings about;
- The movement of love which was essential to the Triune God manifested itself in the promise of justice and peace;
- There were signs of God's reign to come which was already visible here and now wherever reconciliation and healing were seen;
- Following Jesus meant meeting God wherever people suffer injustice, violence and war.
- To experience God´s presence with the most vulnerable, the wounded, and the marginalized was a transformative experience;
- Alive in the Spirit, Christians discovered their deepest power and energy for the transformation of an unjust world, joining with other faith communities and all people of good will as companions on the way.

He noted some of the "stations" along the way in the pilgrimage of justice and peace which were visited by the reference group and theological study group. The themes were based on the burning issues of those places being visited.

- 2015 Geneva – Climate Justice
- 2016 Israel/Palestine (& Middle East) – Peacebuilding in Contexts of Violence
- 2017 Nigeria (& Africa) – Peacebuilding in Contexts of Interreligious Conflict
- 2018 Colombia (& Latin America/Caribbean) – Diakonia and Sustainable Development
- 2019 Thailand/Myanmar (& Asia) – Racism
- 2020 Fiji (& Pacific) – Caring for People, Water, and Earth Justice
- 2021 North America/Turtle Island – Racism and Indigenous Peoples
- 2022 Europe – Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity.

In 2014 the central committee identified global concerns:
- life affirming economies;
- climate change;
- non-violet peace-building and reconciliation;
- human dignity.

These gave focus to the journey. But listening and respecting the host communities, also meant developing a helpful methodology in the spirit of the pilgrimage, i.e. visiting communities where they are as opposed to staying in hotels or conference centres. Pilgrim team visits were organized (2016-2021) in the context of the spiritual approach also adopted by the 2014 central committee meeting:
- Celebrating the gifts, dancing and singing on the way
- Visiting the wounds, lamenting, crying and sharing tears with the communities
- Transforming the injustices, witnessing the courage and creativity of the churches was inspiring.

Sharing our stories and narratives on the way we tried to learn from the experiences, with the local communities. This has now brought us to emerging themes:
- truth and trauma;
- land and displacement;
- gender justice;
- racial justice;
- health and healing (having come up during the last two years, with the pandemic).

The reference and theological study groups reflected theologically/Christologically on these themes. As mentioned by the moderator in her address the previous day, we were encouraged to let go and let Christ take centre stage. This moved us to an ecumenical theology of companionship to be further developed by the central committee and the churches.

As we journeyed to the Karlsruhe Assembly we were encouraged to move on together through
- truth-telling, to heal trauma;
- stopping the violation of land and waters, to address displacement and forced migration;
- overcoming gender injustice, starting within the churches;
- ending racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia and white privilege;
- caring for health and healing.

To continue this pilgrimage the council needed to get engaged in climate justice, to decolonize churches and ecumenical spaces and to walk in new ways. In conclusion Dr Enns referred the central committee to the recommendation to consider and discuss the document on the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship and forward it to the assembly.

The moderator of the session thanked Dr Enns for the presentation which had helped the central committee to reflect on the pilgrimage and to look forward to moving together to the assembly and beyond. She opened the floor for comments from the body.

Rev. Dr Henrietta Hutabarat-Lebang (Gereja Toraja) thanked Dr Enns for the presentation saying it was challenging on how to move ahead. The issue of violence against children was a very critical issue at this moment and that this issue should be one of the priorities of the Council.

Rev. Rainer Kiefer (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) expressed his thanks for this report and the good ideas behind it. As a pastor, he testified that his church had used the pilgrimage of justice and peace to identify "locations of peace" in the church. Cities and towns were identified and congregations were encouraged to work on peace and reconciliation. He was thankful that this WCC programme had reached the parishes and become so meaningful. He hoped that the PJP learnings and issues around the trauma experienced by women could be worked on more in the churches. He encouraged the fellowship to walk on in this pilgrimage and urge others to join.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke also thanked Dr Enns for the presentation and affirmed the proposal for a theology of companionship. She noted that climate change, as identified in 2014, was not included in the emerging themes of today. She asked if climate justice was still to be a programmatic area of work for the council.

Bishop Swenson expressed thanks to the PJP reference group and theological study group for all their work.

2.4. Draft Unity Statement (GEN PRC 03)

Bishop Swenson opened the hearing session on the draft Unity Statement. Every assembly had a unity statement to express the experience and the desire of the churches for deeper unity in faith and action. A drafting group was appointed by the previous general secretary to develop a draft unity statement. The statement was presented at this meeting for discussion and was referred to the policy reference committee. She then invited the moderator of the group, Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou, and one of the members, Rev. Dr Susan Durber, to present the draft unity statement.

Dr Kolovopoulou said that the drafting committee had worked intensively despite the challenges of the pandemic. The assembly theme inspired the group and reflects the ministerial role of the WCC in the common advocacy of the member churches regarding crucial situations throughout the world on questions of human dignity, freedom and justice, human exploitation, oppression, etc. The experience of the last two years, due to the shadow of the pandemic, and its worldwide consequences, clearly showed the fragility of life, the vulnerability of humanity and how the world has been deeply shattered and how humanity was deeply divided. This had ultimately revealed the weakness of our faith in God and our dependence upon God. The draft unity statement, coming in this extraordinary time, had a more pastoral character to respond to the present common wounds of humanity, bringing to the surface the need to repent and the necessity of mutual solidarity and respect in light of our Christian identity. The statement aimed to give us an opportunity for further reflection as

Christians. The text itself, due to the nature of its subject matter, had reflected the diversity of denominational and interpretational principles and positions of the faith traditions of the members of the committee. This draft statement was a call and a cry to provoke one another to love and an encouragement to keep moving together, regardless of the difficult circumstances along the way. Additionally, it was hoped that the draft statement might stimulate the WCC's theological work on the meaning of unity.

Rev. Dr Susan Durber was asked to guide the group through the text. She said that the group had met in-person at the end of 2019 and since then online, every other month. WCC assemblies had a tradition of making statements on unity and this draft was developed in that tradition. The group prayed together, presented to each other and reflected together on the theme of love. As the work proceeded the group tried to hold three things together:

- awareness of the love of God, the love of God which was a gift to us, the love embodied in Jesus Christ;
- the state and experiences of the world, including the pandemic and the climate crisis;
- the challenge of the call of the ecumenical movement.

Dr Durber went through the draft statement, section by section, highlighting the different points, all focused on the love of God through Christ and the power of love to reconcile and bring together. The unity statements of the previous assemblies were noted in the statement and for this assembly, the idea that the quest for true unity was always founded in love, was proposed and then unpacked. It was the quality of the relationships between our churches that would make most visible the divine communion we professed and proclaimed. The search for unity that was inspired by love and rooted in deep and mutual relationship might be termed an 'ecumenism of the heart'. The final paragraphs were a call to love one another.

Bishop Swenson thanked both the presenters. She referred to the discussion which had already begun in the chat. The executive committee reviewed the draft just before this meeting and received with appreciation the draft unity statement prepared by the drafting group. The executive committee invited and encouraged the central committee to make comments and suggestions to the draft during this meeting; and to post comments on the document resource and discussion portal by 28 February. In addition, the executive proposed that the suggestions made by the central committee be incorporated by the drafting group, with the possibility of the leadership of the central committee to invite additional persons; and that a revised draft unity statement for consideration by the assembly be reviewed at the next executive committee meeting for action (to forward to the central committee and then to the assembly). She opened the floor for comments from the body.

Dr Theodora Issa (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East) noted that the statement called churches to various actions. She asked if the statement would be sent to the churches before the assembly for their theological input.

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church) underlined the importance of this particular document for the assembly. The unity statement coming from a WCC assembly was expected by Christians and churches all over the world and it must respond to those with various ways of thinking and theologies. He reiterated the call for

comments to the statement so that it became more reflective of the whole fellowship. He appreciated the draft and the theological thinking in the statement.

Rev. Dr Henrietta Hutabarat-Lebang thanked the group for the draft which contained deep theological reflections as well as some historical perspectives of the WCC's journey in understanding unity of the churches through its assemblies. She reflected on the idea of unity of the churches and unity of humanity. In the very multi-faith context of Asia, our companions along the way were people of other faiths. She asked that in this draft unity statement, something be said about how Christ's love not only led to the unity of the church but also to the unity of humanity. It was important to see those of other faiths, not as strangers, but as neighbours.

H.E Metropolitan Gennadios affirmed H.E. Metropolitan Nifon's comments and expressed his appreciation to the group for all their work on the statement. It was important to understand the expectation of such a document. As with the statements from the last assemblies, this statement was a theological tool which would be used by the assembly and also beyond the assembly. The expectation, particularly for this assembly, given that the pandemic had really affected the churches, was to show where the fellowship was on Christian unity. He also noted that the perspective from which we read the text is critical. If it was read from a very narrow theological perspective then the text needed more theological strength. If it was read from a cultural, missional or more socio-political perspective where love and unity dominate, then the risk was that the text became sentimental. To avoid this the executive committee made the recommendation to gather the comments and discussion points from this central committee meeting, and also to enrich the drafting group with some new members in order to give more dynamics to the group. In response to the earlier question by Dr Issa, he affirmed that the churches, through their delegations at the assembly, could provide input for the unity statement.

Rev. Fr Andrzej Choromanski (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) thanked the group for the work. He appreciated the message of the draft unity statement but thought it could be shortened and a bit more condensed in content. From the Pontifical Council's perspective the ecumenical movement was focusing on the unity of the Church, on Christian unity. He felt that there was not enough consideration of this in the draft statement. He also said it would be helpful if there were more balance between the two aspects of unity, love and truth. Understandably the statement focused on love as it was inspired by the assembly theme. He felt that love was not enough for unity but that the churches met in truth. He hoped that at least one paragraph would be developed and added, on this aspect of truth for the unity of the church, and also for the unity of the world.

Rev. Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ) said that the statement was very well drafted and she appreciated the work of the drafting group. Some intentionality around inter-religious and inter-faith accompaniment was missing. Christianity was no longer monolithic and we lived in a time of increased pluralism. It was important to be more explicit when the statement spoke of "people of good will", honouring the other traditions of those who journey with us. She added that in addition to individualism and nationalism which were mentioned, in a divided church Christian supremacy and Christian radicalism should also be

added as a challenge to real church unity as we aspired to be Church. The Church was beyond the membership of the WCC.

H.G. Bishop Abraham (Coptic Orthodox Church) thanked the committee for the draft statement. He agreed with the need for love but love was not enough for unity. He referred to the book of Ephesians and said that he would like to see the theological perspective of the Orthodox family where to be united meant being called to "one Lord, one faith and one baptism".

Dr Kolovopoulou thanked all the members for their active engagement with the draft unity statement and the valuable remarks which were offered to the text. At this stage the statement was not meant to be shared with the churches for consultation. She took the comments about inter-faith relations seriously, but said that the statement was meant to address the Christian world, even as we fully appreciated that people of other faiths lived among us in this pluralistic world. She added that responses were still expected from the churches on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Once these were received, we could have a broader view of where we stood concerning our ecclesiological perspective on unity. These responses would be important for the further work of the drafting committee. She reminded the body that this unity statement was a bit different from previous ones because of the assembly theme and because of the extraordinary situation the world found itself in because of the pandemic.

Dr Durber was grateful for the responses and the high level of engagement of the body. She challenged the idea that love was not enough and felt that it encompassed everything, e.g. we speak the truth in love, Christ sacrificed his live in love, love is what we are commanded to do, not only to our friends but also to our enemies. The group wanted to include in this statement that what had perhaps been missing recently in WCC statements was the passion for unity that would enable us to engage in theological discussions and acts of solidarity together. Today, unity was about appealing to each other to move together on the global and ecclesial challenges. She added that the group worked well together and expected to return to the drafting following this meeting. She asked that new members not be added to the group as a good dynamic and trust had already been built up among the members. This did not mean that the group was not open to more comments advice and suggestions.

Bishop Swenson closed the session and said that the draft unity statement would be referred to the policy reference committee for further consideration and discussion.

2.5. Overview of matters for referral and decision (GEN 05)

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session on the overview of matters for referral to the different standing committees. She added that every member was invited to send comments to the standing committees by email.

2.5.1. Communications Committee Agenda

The items were referred to the communication committee, under the leadership of Ms Miriam Jane Weibye (Church of Scotland). Ms Weibye said that since the last meeting of the WCC central committee, the communications department had worked to more closely align with and serve the churches' work for healing, consolation and ecumenical solidarity in an

unprecedented time of global emergency. Through its communications, WCC had tried to nurture ecumenical Christian community in difficult times of pain and disinformation. Especially through its digital presence – in webinars and conferencing, streaming, publications, podcasts, videos, and social media, and on its new website – the team had not only ensured a constant stream of news and updates but also, delivered practical pastoral tools and healthcare guidance, offered inspiring spiritual resources and lifted for reflection the most important and urgent considerations raised by this global emergency.

For WCC communications, in particular, the constraints of the global pandemic had forced a sharper focus, sparked more urgent innovation, and brought a keener awareness of the interconnected challenges facing the fellowship and a hurting world.

She presented the agenda for the standing committee.

The journey of the ecumenical fellowship since the last assembly was documented in the report, **Pilgrims on the Path of Peace – From Busan to Karlsruhe**. It recounted the collective journey the council and its member churches undertook after that gathering and gauges how its activities and programmes had measured up to the pilgrimage mandate. The report assessed those years of ecumenical endeavour against the WCC's five strategic aims, articulated soon after the assembly. The **Update on Pilgrims on the Path to Peace** updated the central committee on the report's most recent additions to reflect the journey during the pandemic and the course of the pilgrimage.

Increasingly, the WCC and the churches saw themselves as nurturing spaces where people and groups could engage in earnest and sincere dialogue about the most profound issues and values and dilemmas contended in contemporary life. Seeing the churches as safe spaces for dialogue highlighted a true ecumenical vocation, as in **Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality**: where we could thoughtfully and prayerfully address division while affirming diversity and a common quest for mutual understanding. The proposal for communicating this study and dialogue resource for the churches, as guided by the central committee, could be found in **Conversations on the Pilgrim Way Communication Plan**.

The truly transformative work of Christian churches in society continues today, as it had from New Testament times, though in a radically pluralistic environment. **Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia**, developed through years of collaborative work with member churches and ecumenical partners, claimed those diaconal roots in Bible and theology and identified deep values to inform the common quest for social justice and human dignity in the churches and beyond. The **Communication Plan for Ecumenical Diakonia Document** offered a communications plan for making this resource document available to the churches, specialized ministries, and other partners as a resource for understanding, affirming, and enhancing ecumenical Christian collaborative service in the world.

In ways unforeseen even a few years ago, the development, ubiquity, and wide-ranging effects of digital media had posed enormous social, political, personal, and theological questions. **A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century** proposed a much-needed new communications paper for the 21st century to understand and tackle these issues and lift the

ideals of social justice, truth-telling, and inclusive communication amid the complexities of our digital age.

As amply demonstrated by the nearly 60-page list of WCC **Actions on Public Issues** (GEN COM 07), the WCC secretariat had been intensely involved in documenting, publishing, supporting, and promoting the WCC public initiatives and statements. Led by the CCIA and the general secretary, the WCC had, in hundreds of situations, invited, encouraged, goaded, and even scolded actors in the public sphere and in the churches to do justice and practice the ways of peace.

2.5.2. Finance Policy Committee Agenda

The matters were referred to the finance policy committee, under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin]). He expressed his thanks to members of the finance policy committee and also of the Green Village steering committee and especially to the staff for all the work done in both finance and for the Green Village. He presented the documents for consideration and discussion by the finance policy committee.

Update on Finance, including assembly (GEN FIN 02) presented a good financial outcome for 2021 with a net increase in funds and reserves of about CHF 1 million, based on the preliminary financial report. This meant WCC started its assembly year in good shape, thanks to the member churches and ecumenical partners. There were challenges ahead. The update included a view on the assembly budget from 2018-2023, now updated to factor in expenditure results from 2021. The approved budget for the year of the assembly was at CHF 10.9 million. About CHF 4.1 million was covered by the assembly fund balance, the designated fund for the assembly, and grants and contributions received in advance in 2021, for the year 2022 . The receipt of the remaining CHF 6.8 million was expected, while its timing was quite critical. The standing committee would look into the impact of the different financial scenarios described in **Preparing the Assembly in the Context of Global Pandemic** (GEN NOM 05).

Report of the Audit Committee, summary since 2018 (GEN FIN 03) presented a short summary of the work conducted by the audit committee from 2018, date of its last report to central committee, highlighting the issues addressed, and currently being monitored, by the committee. For these three years the auditors issued an opinion that the financial statements complied with Swiss law, the WCC Constitution and Rules and its accounting policies.

An expression of the love of the member churches in cherishing each other and this precious fellowship, was found in the **Membership Contributions Report** (GEN FIN 04). For 2021 we rejoiced in the fact that there was an increase in the number of member churches contributing as well as an increase in the value of the actual contribution in Swiss francs compared to the previous year. CHF 3.5 million was received. The finance policy committee would receive a report on the membership contribution plan and would open a first discussion on the possible approach to a new membership contributions plan to be launched after the assembly.

The **Update on Green Village** (GEN FIN 05) was a short update on the Green Village real estate development project, presenting progress with the project work since June 2021, and observations on the prospects and challenges ahead. A non-binding offer was received for the Kyoto land and building project in November 2021 from a Swiss institutional investor, one of the most important real estate investors in Europe. A period of exclusivity was granted in December with a view for a binding offer to be received at the end of February or early March 2022. It was very important that this project move forward since a slow down had been imposed on the construction site since summer 2021. He added that the project was one of the most important tasks the WCC was facing today. The standing committee would be glad to address any question on the Green Village project.

Bishop Swenson thanked the archbishop for presenting the agenda of the standing committee.

2.5.3. Governance and Nominations Committee Agenda

The matters were referred to the governance and nominations committee under the leadership of Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland). He presented the agenda for the standing committee which consisted of different kinds of matters and said that the documents could be classified into five groups.

Like the other standing committees the governance and nominations committee would review the **Moderator's Address**, **Report of the Executive Committee** and the **Report of the Acting General Secretary**.

Secondly the committee would discuss the **Report of the Working Group on Constitution and Rules** and its appendices. The working group expected the central committee to receive its report and the appendices. However, the decision on proposed amendments would be deferred to an in-person meeting of the central committee where they could be discussed rule- by-rule.

The assembly planning committee (APC) has continued working on assembly business and thematic plenaries, as shown in the **Report of the Assembly Planning Committee, October 2021** (GEN NOM 03.1). The executive committee approved the proposals of the APC and the central committee was now expected to propose that the assembly appoints six committees to accomplish the business of the assembly. The executive committee asked the central committee to approve the proposed leadership of the assembly committees (see **Proposed Assembly Leadership and Plenary Speakers**, GEN NOM 03.2), a consensus facilitation team and thematic plenary speakers.

The committee was also asked to approve replacements for central committee and the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (see **Nominations**, GEN NOM 04). The agenda included proposing additional delegates for nomination by the central committee, with the constitutional provision to nominate members of the leadership of the central committee, not otherwise nominated by their church.

In preparing for the assembly it was necessary to monitor the impact of the pandemic. The document on **Preparing the Assembly in the Context of Global Pandemic** (GEN NOM 05)

reported on the regular meetings between the leadership of the central committee and the leadership of the host committee to review the evolving situation. April 2022 was a critical moment with regard to accommodation contracts, budget considerations and the registration of participants.

In addition to these matters the central committee was asked to approve the **Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing By-Laws** (GEN NOM 06) and the **Young People in the Ecumenical Movement (YPEM) Commission By-Laws** (GEN NOM 07). The central committee was also asked to approve the **Gender Justice Principles** (GEN NOM 08) for WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions and reference groups.

This concluded the matters before the governance and nominations committee. Bishop Peura encouraged the members to send their comments on any of the documents mentioned to the committee.

2.5.4. Policy Reference Committee Agenda

The matters were referred to the policy reference committee under the leadership of Bishop Sally Dyck (United Methodist Church). The policy reference committee dealt with our relationships and who we were as a fellowship. In its work it navigated those relationships, sometimes with policies, taking note of and analysing ecumenical developments. She presented the agenda for the standing committee.

The committee would look at the **Moderator's Address**, **Report of the Executive Committee** and the **Report of the Acting General Secretary** in light of what each of those said around our relationships as churches.

Membership Matters (GEN PRC 02) included the applications of both The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) and Apostolic Faith Mission South Africa which were accepted by the central committee in June 2021 for "an interim period" in accordance with WCC Rule I.5. The executive committee had recommended that central committee receive the two churches as members of the WCC. In addition, it was also recommended to accept the Anglican Province of Alexandria into membership. This church was formed out of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, a WCC member church since 1976, as the result of significant growth and development of the church in Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa – and not out of division.

The **Draft Unity Statement** (GEN PRC 03) would also come before the policy reference committee for consideration following the spirited discussion in plenary earlier.

The reports of the meetings of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration would come before the committee with the **Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration 2022** (GEN PRC 04.3) for action. Many of the PCCC recommendations, particularly regarding the assembly, had already been or are being implemented. The 2022 report and recommendations were presented for action with the 2019 and 2020 reports presented as appendices.

The **Report of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church to the Assembly** (GEN PRC 05) reflected many years of work. The title of the report *"Walking, Praying and Working Together – An Ecumenical Pilgrimage"* reflected both WCC and RCC journey since the Busan Assembly. It included a study on peace-building and a study on migration and refugees. The report was approved by the Joint Working Group for presentation both to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the WCC 11th Assembly.

Finally the standing committee would receive the **Global Christian Forum Update** (GEN PRC 06). The Global Christian Forum emerged in response to the Harare Assembly in 1998 as a way to strengthen the one ecumenical movement. Today it was a platform for sharing and dialogue across diverse church traditions. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the WCC and the Global Christian Forum was revised at the recommendation of the executive committee (November 2018) to reflect changes in collaboration. It was applied in spirt, but the pandemic had delayed meeting in person to sign the MOU.

2.5.5. Programme Committee Agenda

The items were referred to the programme committee under the leadership of Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland). She presented the agenda for the standing committee. The committee would look at the **Moderator's Address**, **Report of the Executive Committee** and the **Report of the Acting General Secretary**.

The programme committee agenda included the review of number of resource documents for use in ecumenical conversations at the assembly, including Ecumenical Diakonia, Conversations on the Pilgrim Way and a Theology of Companionship. The agenda also included the substantial work of WCC commissions over the past three years, including the Faith and Order Commission, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Commission and Education and Ecumenical Formation, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and the Commission of Young People in the Ecumenical Movement. The programme agenda included the report the Gender Advisory Group and the road map to establishing a new Commission on the Churches on Health and Healing. Because of the time constraints she mentioned the documents before the standing committee:

- Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia resource document (GEN PRO 02.1)
- Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia resource document Addendum (GEN PRO 02.2)
- Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality, A Resource for Reflection and Action (GEN PRO 03.1)
- Report of the Gender Advisory Group (GEN PRO 04)
- Proposal for a Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing (GEN PRO 05)
- Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship A Resource Document (GEN PRO 06.1)
- Report of the Reference Group, Theological Study Group and Harvest Gathering (GEN PRO 06.2)
- Commission of the Churches on International Affairs Summary Report 2019, Bali (GEN PRO 07.1)
- CCIA Summary Report 2020, Brisbane (GEN PRO 07.2)
- CCIA Summary Report 2021, Johannesburg (GEN PRO 07.3)

- Arusha Report, 2018 (GEN PRO 08.1)
- Report of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 2019, Helsinki (GEN PRO 08.2)
- CWME Highlights 2019-2021 (GEN PRO 08.3)
- Highlights of the Faith and Order Commission 2019, Nanjing (GEN PRO 09.1)
- Commission on Faith and Order Highlights 2019-2021 (GEN PRO 09.2)
- Proposal for Faith and Order World Conference (GEN PRO 09.3)
- Report of the Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) Commission, 2019 (GEN PRO 10)
- Report of the ECHOS Commission on Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement (GEN PRO 11).

Many of the documents were presented for information. However, the programme committee was expected to recommend actions by the central committee on establishing a commission on health and healing and holding a Faith and Order World Conference in 2025, 1700 years following the Council of Nicea, the first ecumenical council to be held.

Bishop Swenson reminded the central committee that all members, regardless of the standing committee to which they belong, were invited to send comments to the various committees through the email addresses published in the annotated agenda.

The central committee approved by consensus that the matters presented be referred to the various standing committees.

2.6. Update on the process of the election of a new general secretary

Bishop Swenson moderated a hearing session. Dr Agnes Abuom shared an update from the leadership of the central committee, on the election of a new WCC general secretary. She affirmed that the search committee elected by the central committee, had done their work and prepared their report. The LCC really hoped that this current central committee meeting could be held in-person. It was painful to have had to make the decision to hold this central committee meeting online.

As moderator of the central committee and custodian of the search process, she reported that she had a meeting with the moderator of the search committee, Prof. Dr Fernando Enns, in December, in anticipation that the central committee could meet in-person at this time. Following this she had met with the vice-moderator, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, and Bishop Sally Dyck, secretary of the search committee to further discuss some of the dilemmas. She reiterated that the WCC constitution and rules stated that the election of a general secretary should take place in-person. Some had proposed a June 2022 in-person central committee meeting in order to hold the election. Even with this proposal, it was not guaranteed that it would be possible to meet in-person.

If an in-person meeting was possible, she asked whether the discussions and election would help us to move forward to the next assembly. The place and role of a WCC general secretary was so vital because the general secretary was the voice of the movement, rather than just a person in an administrative role. This position was one which rallies the churches and the social movements.

If the central committee reception of the report of the search committee and election experience were not positive then the risks of negative impact would have to be managed. This could have further negative effects on the preparation for and the atmosphere of the next assembly.

With the leadership of the search committee and the LCC, the possibility deferring the election of the general secretary till the next central committee was also raised.

A point of order was raised that one of the candidates, as a central committee member, was participating in the meeting. There was confirmation that he left the meeting.

The moderator continued and said that one possibility would be to consider handing this matter over to the next central committee. She reminded the committee that leadership of the council, in the form of the acting general secretary, was in place. Bishop Swenson added that, for the leadership of the central committee, the priority was to have a good assembly and that this should be kept in mind, as we prepared for an election of a new general secretary.

Bishop Swenson opened the floor for discussion.

Rev. Marianne Brekken (Church of Norway) asked whether the LCC had also discussed the fact that several in the staff leadership group would be leaving the council as was seen through the published vacancy notices. She asked to hear the reflection of the LCC about moving forward in such a situation. The acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, responded that the decision of the executive committee to open these positions stemmed from the fact that some of the colleagues were coming to the age of retirement and to the end of their contract. The decision was to have an application process till the end of April, shortlist and interview the candidates in May and then to come with proposals to the executive committee in June. It was envisaged that the newly appointed staff would start in November in order to have two months' overlap and handover with those currently in the positions. Then as of January 2023 the staff would be fully active in their new positions. In this way the WCC can continue in a position of strong capacity.

Rev. Dr Sang Chang (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea) strongly expressed that finding the new general secretary was the responsibility of this current central committee. The world was changing fast and a leader was needed who could navigate these changing waters of the world. Thought the selection process had been delayed, that was all the more reason to find the right leaders for this office. She added that finding good leadership was more important than finding leadership quickly.

Bishop Sally Dyck affirmed what the two speakers had said. This was a critical moment for the WCC and risked becoming a crisis if we continued to go forward without identifying a new leader in the position of general secretary. The assembly would set the tone and direction for the next years, but the institution was still unstable and vulnerable if the new general secretary was not present at the assembly to hear what the churches were saying. It was also important for the assembly to get a sense of who their new leader. She heartily agreed that it was the responsibility of this central committee to finish the process that was started of

searching for and electing a new general secretary. She encouraged the central committee to try and hold an in-person meeting in June 2022.

Rev. Laurent Schlumberger (Eglise protestante unie de France) said that electing a new general secretary three months before the assembly might deprive the candidate of legitimacy and lead to not choosing the best leader. He affirmed that the general secretary currently in position was doing his job well and that it would be better for the next central committee to elect a new general secretary for the future.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon was grateful to the moderator for mentioning a few possibilities of how to address the current situation. The pandemic made it impossible to meet in-person since 2020. He said he was a member of the search committee and that the report has been ready for two years already. Having a meeting of the central committee in June, so close to the assembly, could compromise the preparations and thus result in a weaker assembly. He was in favour of forwarding the issue to the next central committee for them to act quickly, either on the election or on a new process.

Dr Audeh Quawas expressed his reservation to the fact that one of the candidates was present during the beginning of the discussion.

He referred to the process of the search and election of a general secretary in the Rules and Supplement to the Rules and reminded the committee that even if there was an in-person meeting of the central committee, this did not mean that there would be an election. The process was that the report of the search committee was presented. The central committee could then accept or reject the report. An election could only take place if the central committee accepted the report.

He added that the candidates had been patiently waiting for the election. Times had changed since three years. If the search started now, other candidates might have applied. He also expressed concern about the financial implications of holding an in-person meeting of the central committee just for the election, when the election was not even guaranteed to happen.

He agreed that the assembly should take priority and that the election could easily be deferred in order to take the proper time to find the right leader. He also asked that for further discussion, the acting general secretary would not be present in the meeting, so that members could speak more freely. Such discussions should only be held in closed session.

Dr Enns, as chair of the search committee, made three remarks. The WCC was with an acting general secretary and the WCC was in good hands until the end of December 2022 when his contract ended. The WCC was also blessed with two competent candidates, identified by the search committee, who still were committed to the whole process. Referring to the conversation reported by Dr Abuom in December, he wanted to clarify that he felt strongly that every effort should be made to complete this process and hold and election before the assembly. He agreed that the assembly should not be burdened by this process. Even if we did not know if an in-person meeting was possible, or if an election would take place, all efforts should be made to finish this task.

Bishop Swenson thanked the speakers and assured the committee that this issue would be further discussed during the central committee meeting taking into consideration all the views which had been expressed, both in plenary and in the chat.

Dr Abuom affirmed that the LCC has heard the comments of the central committee members. She said that this transition was critical. It was not clear if a June in-person meeting would be possible. She thanked the search committee and in particular, she was grateful to the candidates, who were still ready to offer their services as general secretary. She hoped that this work could be brought to a proper conclusion.

To close the session, H.E. Metropolitan Serafim offered a prayer from St John Chrysostom.

2.7. Closing Prayer, Thursday 10 February

The closing prayer focused on the gifts of creation.

3. Regional Meetings, Standing Committees 10-11 February

Every region had the opportunity to meet on 10 or 11 February at different times. The meetings provided an opportunity to pray, share and discuss preparations for the assembly – to look forward with hopes and expectations for the assembly. Regional meetings shared from their meetings the sessions which took place in plenary on Monday 14 February and Tuesday 15 February.

3.1. Pacific

On Monday, 14 February, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session. She reminded the group of the recent volcanic eruption and tsunami which prevented the WCC president from the Pacific, Rev. Dr Meleana Maimoa Puloka (Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga [Methodist Church in Tonga]) from participating in this online meeting. She was thankful that the general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, Rev. James Bhagwan, could participate in the meeting and would share from the Pacific regional meeting.

Rev. Bhagwan greeted the gathering from Suva, Fiji, where it was already Tuesday, 15 February. Towards the end of last year and in the beginning of this year many island states were experiencing their first wave of COVID-19, with both the Delta and Omicron variants. The countries which were still COVID-free were those with closed borders which meant there are citizens stranded abroad. Tonga continued to slowly recover from the massive volcano eruption and subsequent tsunami in January. Communications had been disrupted and recovery had been complicated due to an Omicron outbreak caused by relief workers. The region continued to be affected by extreme weather patterns as a result of climate change. At present, Tropical Cyclone Dovi which was a category 3 cyclone was hitting Vanuatu, Kanaky (New Caledonia) as well as affecting Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Self-determination and justice issues continued in the region, particularly for Mahoi Nui (French Polynesia), Kanaky and Tanah (West Papua). Thanks were expressed by the regional group for the WCC's ongoing advocacy and support for these communities particularly for the

advocacy to the French government, although unsuccessful, to delay the third referendum for independence for Kanaky which was largely boycotted by the Indigenous community. Geopolitical issues such as the Indo-Pacific new cold war between the USA, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and India on one side and China on the other side, were currently playing out in the Pacific region with various island states caught in between.

In preparation of the WCC 11th Assembly, Pacific churches remained concerned about their attendance due to closed borders internally and externally, and ongoing natural disasters caused by climate change. Electronic and online meetings were generally very difficult for those in the Pacific region due to the timing, as was shown by the small attendance of Pacific central committee members. The regional group asked that some consideration of this situation be taken on board and the scheduling of future meetings be held at different times so that all may participate. He assured the body that the Pacific members continued to pray for the member churches in all parts of the world in these challenging times.

Bishop Swenson thanked him for the descriptive and helpful report from the region.

3.2. Asia

Rev Prof. Dr Sang Chang, WCC president from Asia, shared from the Asia regional meeting. The meeting was attended by 30 members of the central committee, advisors, stewards, and staff members. The meeting was a platform for sharing the experiences and deep insights from the lives and times of churches and communities in Asia.

With regard to the continuing impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on life and worship, voices were heard from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Indonesia, revealing the economic hardships that continued to burden societies, increasing the divide between the rich and the poor. Many communities still experienced vaccine inequity, with poor access to health services. Instances of domestic violence and child abuse had been on the rise. But the meeting was informed that churches were at the forefront in providing accompaniment to communities with assistance to livelihoods and providing the space and the messaging to promote vaccinations and to overcome misinformation. The last two years had also had a dramatic impact on churches in their experiences as a worshipping community. Churches in Indonesia and Sri Lanka had galvanised communities through online prayer services. In Thailand, even as the restrictions related to the pandemic are easing, many young people were in favour of online service over in-person worship. The practices and functions of our churches were being challenged.

Concerning internal displacement and refugees, the military coup in Myanmar had caused the increase of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Myanmar, in the border regions with Thailand, well beyond the nine established refugee camps. People were continuing to attempt to cross the border river, risking their lives. The situation of women and children of internally displaced communities in West Papua, was very precarious, due to the conflicts and continuing human rights abuses they experience. The dire situation of more than a million Rohingya people who were refugees in Bangladesh, was also profoundly impacting the host communities. We cannot forget these ongoing crises, and the global ecumenical family should strengthen the accompaniment of those who had lost their homes and were searching for peace, stability, and sustenance.

In terms of justice for humanity and for the wider creation, the group was reminded of the impact of the ongoing war on drugs in the Philippines, and the blatant abuse of human rights. Minority communities were increasingly experiencing religious intolerance and persecution in India. But communities were standing up to these challenges, and the crying need for global solidarity, to face injustices locally. The injustice experienced by the land and the seas and the wider environment, in Indonesia Sri Lanka were highlighted. With blatant corruption, and breaking laws with impunity and, the rich and the powerful were destroying and undermining creation. Churches in Japan commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and with WCC, affirmed their vision for a Nuclear-free world. The call to protect both people and the planet could no longer be ignored.

In China, the China Christian Council celebrated the 70th anniversary of witnessing Christ, as a united, post-denominational Christian community. The flourishing theological institutes in China were fruit of this unity. Churches in Korea along with the NCCK had been working on the Korea Peace Appeal campaign, building up to 2023, which marks the 70th anniversary of the Armistice Agreement. The Korean churches had also been preparing for the upcoming assembly by organising an official assembly preparation team with the delegates and advisors. The churches in West Papua experienced solidarity through a visit of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The impetus for unity must be accompanied by solidarity and a yearning for justice and righteousness.

She concluded in a prayer:

> As one body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may we continue to feel and empathise with each other's sadness and pains but also appreciate the joys and gains (1 Corinthians 12:25-27). Let us pray and accompany each other. May we have a shared burden for the world, with the commitment to bring the Good News to all creation, and to strive to establish the reign of God, here and now!

Bishop Swenson thanked Dr Chang for her comprehensive and moving report.

3.3. Africa

Bishop Swenson remembered the late WCC president from Africa, Rev. Dr Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, who had parted this world in 2020, and thanked Rt Rev. Arnold C. Temple (Methodist Church Sierra Leone) for his leadership in the Africa regional group.

Bishop Temple thanked the moderator and shared from the regional meeting. The group expressed hope for healing, reconciliation and unity amidst the challenges facing the continent of Africa. Even if the world was broken by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, the meeting acknowledged that God's love had remained at the centre of our hope and provided a sense of unity in the midst of several challenges.

The group looked at the challenges facing the continent. Human rights abuses, COVID-19 and the issue of COVID-19 vaccine injustice were discussed. Conflicts in various countries, such as Ethiopia, Libya and South Sudan and the rise in *coups d'etat* in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Sudan and Mali, as well as militant activities in Nigeria and Cameroun preoccupied those in the meeting. High unemployment and climate change continued to impact life in Africa. The

meeting agreed that it was time for the church to lift its voice and condemn all forms of undemocratic rule, to address injustices and to call for more social cohesion. The churches in the region needed to unite, work together, speak with one voice and be a source of healing among the traumatized and to promote hope in the midst of despair.

The regional meeting also noted signs of hope. The South African government had recently lifted the state of emergency in place since the outbreak of COVID-19. Policies to address gender-based violence and rape had developed in some of the countries and in some cases the perpetrators had been given harsh punishment. Churches and civil society organizations were now coming together to address concerns affecting people.

The group said it hoped for a strong African presence and impact at the WCC 11th Assembly. The assembly theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" was apt and timely, even as the group reflected on the current issues and challenges in the continent of Africa. The group discussed how the African agenda could impact the assembly. The region had to adequately plan for the assembly to ensure that issues affecting the region were effectively discussed in Karlsruhe. The group agreed that there was a need for an African pre-assembly meeting to prepare the assembly and hoped that support could be received for this pre-assembly.

The meeting called for the WCC central committee to particularly stand in solidarity with the churches and people of Nigeria and South Sudan and to issue public statement on the increased militant activities of Boko Haram and other groups in Nigeria and, with regard to South Sudan, the slow implementation of the revitalized peace agreement. Bishop Temple concluded his report.

Bishop Swenson thanked him for the thorough report saying that those affected by the violence in some of the African countries would be held up in prayer.

3.4. Latin America

Mrs Ana María Velilla de Medio (Iglesia Evangélica de los Discipulos de Cristo) shared from the region of Latin America. She reported that Pastor Viviana Pinto had been invited to share the steps that are being taken to reimagine CLAI, the Latin American Council of Churches, during the regional meeting

The situations in the different countries of Latin America were very serious and resulted from two determining factors: the neo-liberal policies applied for decades, and on the other hand, the economic and social crisis related to the corona virus at a global, regional and local levels. The negative effects of the pandemic were not only limited to the economic situation, but had also affected the education, psychological and social development, and especially the precariousness of the diet of millions of children.

The regional group also discussed the importance of being prepared for the next assembly in Germany. To increase motivation the churches were encouraged to propose names for the composition of the different committees. Several members expressed confusion about the process of the election of a new WCC general secretary. They also noted with joy the

rapprochement of some member churches that had been distant, and also the pain produced by the internal conflicts of some other churches.

Mrs Velilla de Medio concluded the report with a prayer from the region:

> God the giver of life, creator of our continent and the whole world, bless us with the experience of transformation of all creation through paths of justice and peace.

At the end of the session on Monday, 14 February, the moderator, Dr Abuom expressed her thanks to those who shared from the regional meetings. She highlighted the common issues coming from the regional reports: the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, economic justice, unemployment, ecological devastation, displacement, refugees, and the churches' resilience with communities continuing to journey together despite the difficult circumstances. She asked the members to remember those in the regions that were presented and pray for the Pacific, Asia, Africa and Latin America where the churches are working out strategies to revive the regional ecumenical organization after a long journey.

3.5. Middle East

On Tuesday, 15 February, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson moderated a hearing session.

Prof. Dr Very Rev. Jack Khalil (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) shared from the Middle East regional meeting, which was chaired by H.E. Metropolitan Dr Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos (Church of Cyprus). He began by saying that the cry of the Christians in the Middle East was "we want to stay home", in the land where Christianity was born and the church had been present for two thousand years.

Whilst COVID-19 and its challenges were the number one around the world, the Middle East had other dominating challenges. Reported upon by member churches in the Middle East, these challenges continued to dominate the lives of the people in the region.

- Though life was slowly coming back to some parts of Syria, critical difficulties remained in Hassake and Kameshle, such as access to water. ISIS was reviving again in some areas in Syria, and an ongoing migration was witnessed in that area of Syria.
- Lebanon was going through a very difficult situation and needed support and solidarity.
- People were leaving the region in huge numbers. There was a real scare that the Christians numbers would dwindle further and some detect a plan to empty the Middle East from the original inhabitants (Christians).
- When uprooted or forced to flee their areas, Christians did not usually go to refugee camps; it was rather that churches, and church organizations, as well as other Christian families were caring for the Christian refugees.
    - In Cyprus, migrants from Africa were now replacing refugees from the Middle East. There were several migrants from Egypt who were working in the farms in Cyprus. Could the churches work between Cyprus and Lebanon/Syria to facilitate access of Christian families?
    - Parishes in the USA were full of immigrants from Lebanon and Syria.

    - People migrating from the region were not getting a better life elsewhere. Those in the meeting felt that Christians would flourish more if they stayed in their home countries.
- Churches in the region cared for the well-being and security of their people, at the same time they did not want to encourage Christian exodus from the Middle East. Churches were doing a lot to help the people in place but cannot force people to remain.
- Churches needed to come together to put a Strategic plan needed for the Christians to remain in their lands.

Those in the regional meeting expressed their appreciation to the planned WCC visit to Syria through Lebanon as a sign of solidarity with the Christians and the people of Syria. This sign of solidarity was expected and awaited since long time.

The theme for the 11th Assembly was also discussed, and the feeling was that some explanations or interpretations were shallow and do not have theological grounding. The WCC was moving from a focus on Christianity to a focus on humanity and the theme invited the world to unity, not only as churches. The WCC objective was visible unity but it seemed like we were moving to a different discourse of moving together, walking together, etc. That the word "churches" was replaced by "Christians" in the documents, caused a worry.

The churches in the WCC spoke to the world when we met at the assembly, we did not speak only to ourselves. The theme of love as it was developed in the theological document presented to this central committee meeting failed to clarify the main New Testament aspect of love, which was to fulfil the will of God, i.e. love that summarized all the law (Rom 13:8ff; Gal 5:13ff). They said that even with internal challenges amongst the churches, nothing prevented us from going back to the biblical roots of Christ's love.

He asked the central committee to remember the kidnapped Syrian bishops, Archbishop Ibrahim and Archbishop Yaziji, still not returned since 2013.

However, and with all the above-mentioned conditions, the churches in the Middle East continued to hold the "Holy Witness" of Christianity. There was faith in the future and the churches would work faithfully so that they did not become empty sanctuaries and museums. The apostolic churches of the Middle East, strove to be the light and the "salt" of the region, and the only guarantee for a just peace in the world.

Dr Audeh Quawas added the good news that the EAPPI programme had been able to restart in-person.

Bishop Swenson thanked Fr Jack for the presentation and for the various comments in the chat.

3.6. North America

Archbishop Mark MacDonald (Anglican Church of Canada) greeted the central committee in one of the original languages of North America, known to many indigenous people as Turtle Island. The greeting wished the body peace and addressed them as relatives.

North American members recalled the importance of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) to Turtle Island/North America, which addressed both racism in the United States immediately following the murder of George Floyd, and the experience of First Nations peoples in Canada just following recent discoveries of the bodies of indigenous children buried under the grounds of Christian boarding schools. The group stressed the importance of carrying these stories from the PJP into the 11th Assembly. Reflecting on the day's discussion of the draft unity statement, and the theme for the 11th Assembly, the North American group lifted up the importance of maintaining the link between love and justice ("Justice is what love looks like in public." Cornell West), and the importance of truth to reconciliation.

The North American members discussed the recent research report by Amnesty International "Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime against Humanity" describing conditions experienced by Palestinians under occupation, finding that the system imposed on the Palestinian people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the Israeli authorities meets the definition of "apartheid" under international law. Noting that this central committee meeting would not be issuing public statements, the North American participants nonetheless discussed the implications of this important report for the churches, our particular responsibility, and the necessary costs of solidarity with Palestinians.

A delegation to Israel and Palestine of leaders of historic African American and South African churches sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) was led by Bishop W. Darin Moore of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, chair of the governing board of the NCCCUSA. The delegation of leaders on this pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine 21 February - 1 March 2019, was described by Bishop Moore as a diverse group who had come from communities that experienced apartheid, slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, white settler colonialism and genocide against Indigenous peoples from their countries. They issued a clear and concise statement describing what they saw, witnessed and experienced in Israel and occupied Palestine. The group expressed solidarity with Palestinian Christians and stressed the importance of sharing what they had seen, heard and learned and committed themselves to stand in the gap between justice and injustice.

When the African American church leaders returned to the US, many experienced personal attacks when they publicly supported justice for our brothers and sisters in Palestine. African American church leaders who spoke about their own experiences in the struggle against racism in America, and their observations, connecting them to the experiences of Palestinians under occupation were also characterized by some as being anti-Semitic.

The Rev. Tyrone Pitts (Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.) described his experience as an African American church leader, who lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2018-2019. He found that living among Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank was similar to his experiences growing up as an African American living under racism, Jim Crow, and segregation in the United States. He stated that his experience and the experiences of many African Americans whose personal narrative and life experiences identified with the lived experience of Palestinians found stunning resonance with his family and the experiences and those of the African American community whose parents and grandparents survived under

slavery, segregation and Jim Crow. Growing up under Jim Crow and segregation he pointed out that the experiences of the "new Jim Crow" of mass incarceration and militarization of police in their communities in the USA was also present in Palestine. He pointed out that expressing these observations, sharing these personal experiences and stories, provoked aggressive attempts to silence the discourse with accusations of anti-Semitism.

In particular, the members from North America expressed their solidarity with the Rev. Dr J. Herbert Nelson, II, the first African American stated clerk of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A member of the WCC central committee, Dr Nelson's recent statement on Palestine on Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, had provoked such a strong backlash and personal attacks from members of the Jewish community.

Indigenous North Americans described their similar experience, recognizing themselves and the experiences suffered by their ancestors in the descriptions of life for Palestinians under occupation. The conditions experienced by Palestinians, as observed and as described in the Amnesty International report, were tragically familiar.

The regional meeting noted as well that these conditions, this system of occupation, had contributed to the tragically diminishing numbers of Palestinian Christians living in the communities under Israeli occupation.

Bishop Swenson thanked the group and was thankful for the solidarity of the North American churches with those in Occupied Palestine. She commented that it was fitting to have this report directly following that of the Middle East regional group.

3.7. Caribbean

Rev. Karl B. Johnson (Jamaica Baptist Union) shared from the Caribbean regional meeting. The group was happy to be able to meet especially as the assembly was coming soon. The members felt that the concept of reconciliation was dear in the region. As a people, those in the Caribbean, came from regions all over the world. Reconciliation that was rooted in Christ must therefore include work to repair the breaches, those inflicted emotionally, socially, geo-politically and economically. This required intentionality of the regional and global Church in addressing the injustices meted out to the most vulnerable among us, especially in a post-COVID era where issues of climate, justice, economics, racism, violence, political justice as well as discrimination were systemic and deleterious. The group was hopeful that these and other matters would be addressed collectively, especially as we sought to journey together with our ecumenical partners in the neighbouring regions of North and Latin America.

Repairing the breach to effect reconciliation by the *ecclesia* must involve interrogating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in intensifying the gaps between North and South. We must examine the ways the church relates to the marginalized, the vulnerable and the poor. We must look again at resources to address issues of deep-rooted violence and self-hate. Though some did not wish to hear about it, the regional group felt that the issue of reparations should be revisited. Many churches in Europe and North America benefited immensely from that iniquitous engagement to the detriment of the Caribbean region.

Additionally the churches of the Caribbean region wished to remind the assembly and this central committee that the current embargo on Cuba and Haiti must cease if we were sincere in the call for reconciliation.

It was Christ's love that moved and unified us in the region, despite the differences we faced socially, economically and linguistically. WCC member churches must be willing to ensure that denominational priorities would not lead to failure to practice the love in which we were privileged to bask as a result of the absolute generosity of the God who met us in Jesus and in-dwelt us with the Holy Spirit. As we examined this theme from a regional ecumenical perspective, we recognized the need for a Caribbean pre-assembly which would offer a similar opportunity for reflection as we prepare for engagement both during and post assembly.

He concluded with a prayer:

> Almighty and eternal God
> Draw our hearts to you
> Guide our minds
> Fill our imaginations
> Control our wills
> So that we may be wholly yours
> Utterly dedicated to you
> Then use us to your will and
> Always to your glory and the welfare of your people.
> Amen.

Bishop Swenson thanked him for the sharing.

3.8. Europe

Rev. Sarah Moore (United Reformed Church) reported from the Europe regional meeting. The meeting was grateful to WCC for its work in preparing for this meeting and the assembly in September. The group looked forward to the European plenary which would take place at the Karlsruhe Assembly.

The European pre-assembly meeting, organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC), originally planned to take place in Warsaw, would now meet online on 25-26 February. As the most secularized continent in the world, secularization was a central issue in Europe in these times and this would be the focus of the gathering. Connected to secularization were related themes such as pluralism and religious freedom and literacy.

Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty means that CEC had access to high level decision-makers within the European institutions who had a legal obligation to be in dialogue with religious as well as humanist agencies. Some European nations had similar provisions for their internal relationships between faith agencies and the organs of state. Religious illiteracy, a growing issue in Europe, marked by rising hostility and ignorance on matters of faith, questioned this recognition and the presence of faith as a legitimate voice in society. This left European churches with new challenges, most notably how to be a voice in the public square among multiple voices. How could churches maintain their distinctive voice in building European

societies? The authority of the church could no longer be taken as a given in any discussion about any subject, including those about what sort of society we would build in the future. There was a need for the church and other faith groups to speak up for our right to speak as we discerned how to reflect theologically on the role of the church in society. Any right to speak we might claim was founded on our actions so we needed to show what we have to offer, particularly in a time when there were movements which wish to remove or curtail the influence of the church.

The question was posed by several participants asking how the churches themselves had been secularized. The gospel was the root and foundation of our faith. The church was not made in the image of the world, rather the world was embraced by the church. Dialogue and reconciliation was of central importance for believers from all backgrounds, called to be allies to each other in a secularized society.

This secularization brought positives to European society too. In the spirit of appreciating what we had in Europe, rather than lamenting what we had lost or never had, secularization had brought and supported religious and social freedoms that might have been slow to emerge and be accepted otherwise. There was a paradox in that sometimes society welcomed the emergence of eternal truths more quickly than the church had done.

The pre-assembly would relate to analysis of wider society, a cornucopia of good practice witnessing to how churches could add value to reconciliation in our society. We wished to show our decision-makers that churches had something to offer within societies in a European and global context. Europe could show how churches in a secular society were witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ and had a constructive voice in reconciliation that were still sorely needed.

Europe was a changing context. Continuing core concerns and issues such as migration and ecology were reframed through the concern about secularization. The unity statement might assist us to do this. We looked to the Karlsruhe Assembly acting as a lighthouse for our churches and for the public at large. There was a need to shift our focus to look beyond the past to the future. We ponder what the future of Europe might look like and were eager to receive the thoughts from other parts of the world as we considered this question.

Bishop Swenson thanked her for the presentation. She appreciated the different perspectives from the regions and also looked forward to the Karlsruhe assembly where we would all be one world together trying to find Christ's love moving us to reconciliation and unity.

4. Standing Committees 11-12 February

The central committee met in standing committees on Friday 11 February and on Saturday 12 February. The committees discussed the matters referred to each committee, drafted narrative on the committee's discussions and proposed recommendations for action by the central committee. The reports were presented to the decision sessions which took place in plenary on Monday 14 February and Tuesday 15 February.

5. Local Worship 13 February

The central committee participants were invited to attend their local congregations for worship on Sunday, 13 February. A common prayer was provided to the central committee to share with their congregations:

> God of all creation,
> Your love is proclaimed in the abundant life of the heavens and of the planet earth.
> We thank you for Jesus Christ, your Son, who came among us to a share our humanity.
> We thank you for his life and death and resurrection.
>
> Through your life-giving Holy Spirit, we are empowered to engage in your loving activity. We are empowered to respond courageously to the many challenges confronting us.
>
> We celebrate the great love you call us to share with people everywhere.
>
> Even as we encounter huge challenges—pandemic, war, poverty, gender and racial discrimination, modern slavery, our global village groaning with the threat posed by climate change—your son teaches us that you are a humble God of tender compassion, who is with us to provide ways forward, as we discern your will.
>
> We pray that we may be guided into the way of peace.
> Amen.

6. Plenary Session 14 February

6.1. Opening Prayer, Monday 14 February

The Monday morning prayers focused on the Gospel reading Matthew 15:21-28 and Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman. Following the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, the intercessions included prayers for and with the people and churches of Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Following the prayers, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson expressed her gratefulness for being able to worship together in the Ecumenical Centre chapel by video, even as the participants were located all over the world. She appreciated the call to worship through the various instruments throughout the week.

6.2. Report of the Finance Policy Committee

Bishop Swenson moderated a decision session. At the request of the moderator, Mr Douglas Chial provided an overview of the day's agenda and reviewed the conduct of meetings. Quorum was established with 108 members and presidents online in the meeting.

Bishop Swenson informed the meeting that the recorders for the session today included:

- Ms Emily Jane Evans (Uniting Church in Australia)
- Ms Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East)
- Mrs Celina Falk (Church of Sweden)
- Bishop Sally Dyck (United Methodist Church)
- Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland).

H.E Metropolitan Nifon expressed his concern for having a quorum during the closed session and asked the LCC to consider moving the closed session up in the agenda. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios noted that if the closed session was moved up then those who were not part of the closed session would have to leave and it would be difficult for them to come back for the rest of the meeting. Another suggestion was offered by H.E. Metropolitan Serafim and Dr Abuom responded that the LCC would consider the matter to ensure that all could participate in the open sessions of the central committee meeting.

Bishop Swenson invited H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian, moderator of the finance policy committee, to speak. He reported that the committee had met in a good atmosphere with interesting exchanges. He expressed thanks to the committee members as well as to the staff for guiding the committee in its deliberations. The finance policy committee did not recommend any new policies to the central committee at this time. The committee was mostly focused on assembly budget 2022 with its current status and challenges, the report on the membership contributions and the sections on finance and Green Village to be introduced into the report *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: the Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*. On the Green Village, he affirmed that the staff and leadership of WCC and the steering committee were working hard and had been extremely thorough in addressing all the decisions needed related to the project. He again thanked the staff for the good job done, especially in this difficult time.

He asked the rapporteur of the finance policy committee, Mr Carlos Peña (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), to present the recommendations of the report. Mr Peña greeted the committee and read the recommendations, one by one.

1. Moderator's address

The finance policy committee discussed the address of the moderator, and its appreciation of the solidarity between the members of the leadership of central committee.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

1) *the central committee **receive** the report with appreciation, with sincere gratitude for the service and leadership of the moderator, and of the other members of leadership of the central committee.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

2. Report of the acting general secretary

The finance policy committee acknowledged with gratitude the engagement of the acting general secretary, who continued to raise the stature and international influence of the WCC.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

2) *the central committee **receive** the report, in gratitude for the leadership of the acting general secretary, and his commitment to continued service in these challenging times.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

3. Report of the executive committee

The finance policy committee discussed the planning for recruitment of programme directors, from the perspective of management of change, but also from the financial perspective. It was confirmed that budget 2022 addressed the requirements.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

3) *the central committee **receive** the report of the executive committee, with acknowledgement and appreciation of the work of the executive committee members, as it exercised fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the central committee during these extraordinary times.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

4. Update on finance (GEN FIN 02)

The committee received with appreciation a report on the preliminary results 2021, which included total income of CHF 21.9 million (forecast 2021: CHF 22.5 million), expenditure of CHF 20.9 million (forecast 2021: CHF 22.8 million), and a net increase in funds and reserves of CHF 1 million (forecast 2021: decrease CHF 0.3 million).

The finance policy committee expressed gratitude for the solidarity of member churches and ecumenical partners, both for financial contributions received, and for other participation in the work, during the time of the pandemic.

It was reported that there remained open issues which would affect the final financial results. These included the approach to be taken to a claim to recover value-added tax paid, totalling about CHF 400,000, in relation to land sales, in 2019 and 2020, following a decision in favour of the WCC at the administrative tribunal.

The WCC tax advisor had shared the news on 11 February 2022 that the basis for taxation for land sales in 2019 and 2020 would be considerably more favourable than first assessed. As a result, a favourable adjustment to the results for 2021 of about CHF 2 million was now anticipated.

The committee discussed the cost of an in-person meeting of the central committee in Geneva, which was estimated at CHF 600,000 for a full seven-day meeting. It was confirmed that the year 2022 included a budget for such a meeting, since it had been scheduled to take place at this time. That budget would be applied already by about CHF 140,000 at this date, being the estimated cost of the electronic meeting.

Dr Audeh Quawas considered that there was insufficient information in this section, because the preliminary results for total income and total expenditure were not presented with the financial forecast (as shared with executive committee in November 2021). Ms Elaine Dykes said that the document Update on Finance (GEN FIN 02), referred to in this section, contains

all the information on income and expenditure, including the comparative with the forecast. She added that the total forecast income was CHF 22.5 million; therefore, in the preliminary results, WCC reported slightly less than anticipated. The total expenditure as forecast in November 2021 was higher, at CHF 22.8 million, compared with actual expenditure at CHF 20.9 million. Dr Quawas noted that the difference in expenditure was not too large, even with the impacts of COVID-19. These comparative figures would be added to the report of the finance policy committee.

Rt Rev. Arnold Temple remarked that some funds would have been used for this online meeting. He asked how calling an in-person meeting of the central committee in June would affect the budget. Ms Dykes confirmed that if a full 7-day meeting of the central committee is held, then adjustments will be needed in the budget. She said that in 2021 the membership contributions were above what was needed for the programmes and the executive committee required further allocations to the assembly fund and to the building project fund. There could also be some scope to boost the central committee budget as needed without putting at risk the level of general reserves.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

4) *the central committee **receive** the finance update, GEN FIN 02.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

5. Budget update for the 11th Assembly (GEN FIN 02, and appendix to GEN FIN 02)

The assembly budget as approved by the executive committee in November 2021 presented total expected expenditure for the six-year period 2018-2023 at CHF 13.8 million.

Key assumptions and risks remain unchanged compared to November 2021:

1. The GMFA grant 2 is under application only, and is expected to be approved at 50% of € 3 million or higher. The timing is uncertain, but is likely to be in the second half of 2022;
2. EKD's contribution will approximately equal the budgeted amount;
3. VAT asset of CHF 0.9 million will be fully recovered; and
4. Self-generated income of CHF 2.5 million from registration fees and reimbursement of meals will be collected.

While there is an approved budget, three possible scenarios are considered in the document GEN NOM 05, *Planning for the WCC 11th Assembly in the Context of Global Pandemic*.

The finance policy committee discussed scenarios for reduced participation (A-4,300, B-3,000, C-2,500). The update included impacts by scenario, showing that costs would be reduced, but income would be similarly reduced. Net impact in both reduced scenarios remained positive.

Cash flows in 2022, was noted by the finance policy committee as area of focus, with specific challenges in matching the timing of income to that of committed expenditures. It is estimated that approximately CHF 4.1 million is now held in closing balances or deferred income, towards coverage of cash needs for 2022. Therefore, CHF 6.8 million is to be collected over the next six months to meet the event budget of CHF 10.9 million this year. The committee reviewed the list of contributions and other income to be collected, to make up

that total of CHF 6.8 million, as set out in the budget summary, and was reassured that there is good reason to expect that the commitments will be honoured.

In conclusion, it was noted that April 2022 is a critical date to decide, if needed, on the change in the scenario and adapt the assembly financial plan accordingly.

In recommendation 5, the German government was added.

The finance policy committee recommends that the central committee:

5) ***receive*** *the update on assembly financing, with deep appreciation to the commitment of the German host churches, the German government, and the German people, for the financial support for the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe;*
6) ***require*** *that when monitoring is conducted by the leadership with regard to the profile of the assembly under pandemic conditions, the latest financial update be made available, and decision taken also with regard to financial impacts; and*
7) ***require*** *that executive committee receive an updated financial forecast for the assembly in June 2022.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

6. Green Village update (GEN FIN 05)

The finance policy committee discussed the Green Village update, and the current risks encountered in the real estate market, under pandemic conditions, including scarcity of materials, and increasing prices; and the uncertainties concerning the future demand for office space.

The finance policy committee took note of the risks entailed, should the WCC decide to contract a bridging loan, or a construction loan. It was understood that such a financing commitment would only be engaged in order to avoid the closure of the construction site, which would have adverse impact on the whole Green Village project.

The committee discussed the decisions taken in November 2021 by executive committee, concerning the strategy for the Stockholm land and project. Further to the recommendation of the steering committee, the executive committee had required in 2020 that studies be pursued with the objective of marketing the project, to be sold by floor, with land lease. The result of the studies, including the legal analysis, showed no evidence that the project could be marketed successfully with lease of land. In November 2021, the executive committee decided that the strategy for the Stockholm land and project would be sale of floors, with sale of related land-share.

In due course, should a sales transaction for Stockholm be proposed, it would be studied by the steering committee, and if found suitable, would be recommended to the executive committee for decision.

With regard to the decision authority for a sales transaction, the committee recalled the decision of central committee in June 2016, Norway (GEN 08), which states the following:

> "The central committee **delegates** to the leadership of central committee the authority to decide upon sales and long term leases of land or buildings, based on the recommendations of the WCC steering committee for the real estate development project and the decision of the executive committee…"

The finance policy committee was satisfied with the explanation concerning the decisions taken to date, with regard to the Stockholm land and project.

Dr Quawas felt it was a very large task for the leadership of the central committee to be able to decide on sale of land and buildings. He suggested that a change be made in the decision-making so that land cannot be sold.

Bishop Swenson drew the attention of the central committee that the decision quoted was made by the central committee at its meeting in 2016. Ms Dykes referred to the central committee document from the meeting in 2016, *Recommendation on the Real Estate Development Project* (GEN 08), where it said the LCC has the authority to decide on such sales, based on the decision of the executive committee. This could be seen as confusing, since both the executive committee and separately, the LCC, decide on the sale. At the meeting in Trondheim, it had been debated as to how the central committee could be involved in deciding on a sale. She noted that the sales process is complex and detailed, and the steering committee follows such matters very closely. Working with so much information with a large group, like the full central committee, was not deemed practical. In 2016, central committee therefore determined that the decision is made by executive committee, and the LCC is the transactional body which has to actually sign.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

8) *the central committee **receive** the Green Village update **GEN FIN 05**, with gratitude for the work of the steering committee and the executive committee in guiding and leading the project in this challenging time.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

Dr Audeh Quawas (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem) objected to the sale of land and therefore, his opinion is recorded.

7. Report on progress with the membership contributions plan 2014-2021 (GEN FIN 04)

The membership contributions report (GEN FIN 04) provides an overview of how the fellowship of member churches has supported the work of the WCC from 2014 to 2021 with annual membership contributions. It offers an analysis of trends based on the indicators and milestones in the WCC Financial Strategy. In addition to the impact of the pandemic in 2020, the report identifies positive indicators for 2021, including the cumulative contribution level and giving from 187 member churches (a 31-church increase over 2020); the potential of the assembly at a critical moment; and, key learnings for the development of future plans, including the communication tactics in the approach with member churches.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

9) *the central committee **receive** the membership contributions report with gratitude for the generosity of the WCC member churches, and encourage the development of the new membership contributions plan.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

8. Report of the audit committee (GEN FIN 03)

The finance policy committee reviewed the points of emphasis which had been shared with the executive committee, from June 2018 to May 2021. The matters of significance below were noted, as being addressed at present by staff:

- Finalize the equal pay analysis following an amendment to the Federal Act on Gender Equality by June 30 June 2021;
- Carefully consider and update of the tax provision of CHF 2.5 million (2020 – CHF 1.9 million, 2019 – CHF 0.6) in the 2021 annual accounts subject to the confirmation of tax statements from the federal tax authorities;
- As recommended by auditors, due to the changes in the WCC tax status, to review the fund categories as well as the policies for transfers between funds, and distribution of unrestricted contributions. The changes arising from this review will be reflected in the 2021 annual accounts.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

10) *the central committee **receive** the report of the audit committee with gratitude and appreciation to all the members, and in particular to the volunteer members of the audit committee, who invested their time and expertise in the audit committee work during the period since 2018 to date.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

9. Finance sections for *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe* (GEN FIN 06)

The finance policy committee reviewed the draft sections with appreciation, commending the style, which presented the information in an accessible way.

The text included proposals for the illustrations, including a picture of the ecumenical chapel. The chapel was classified as an historical monument by the Canton of Geneva in 2018, being recognised by specialists as "one of the most outstanding specimens of religious architecture in the canton."

The finance policy committee believed that consideration should be given to including a picture of the ecumenical chapel on the cover page of *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace*. This would be one way to honour the history of the chapel, the spiritual heart of the WCC, where over the years, members and ecumenical partners have gathered, to pray, to celebrate, to mourn, and to mark milestones for the fellowship, on the journey for peace and justice, and the witness for unity.

The finance policy committee recommends that:

11) *the central committee approve the section for finance, and the section for Green Village, for the publication, with the illustrations proposed, and subject to final editing, including any relevant update before the finalisation date.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

10. Gratitude to the finance staff

The finance policy committee is grateful to the finance policy committee staff team, for its expertise, its support in conducting the meeting, and its intensive work during this particularly challenging period.

Bishop Swenson reiterated the thanks and added her gratitude to both the moderator and the rapporteur of the finance policy committee.

The full report was received by consensus.

6.3. Report of the Communications Committee

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima moderated a decision session. The communications committee presented their report by video. Ms Miriam Weibye began by thanking the committee members, Rev. Dr Angelique Walker-Smith (National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.), the rapporteur for the committee and the advisors and staff for the good work of the committee. She expressed her gratefulness for the energy, enthusiasm and support evident in the committee meetings.

Dr Walker-Smith continued saying that the communications committee agenda included the report of the central committee to the assembly and a draft communications paper for the 21st century.

A. Moderator's Address (GEN 01)

The communications committee expressed appreciation to the moderator for her report and her affirmations and appreciation for the strength and resilience of WCC members, staff, and partners throughout the pandemic. The committee especially noted her appreciation of the work of WCC Communications during this time.

The committee appreciated the moderator's reflection on xenophobia, but the mention of this should also regard the interreligious contexts in which we lived. References to Christ's love, reconciliation and unity should also consider a religiously pluralistic and multi-cultural world. Communication resources and messaging helped address non-Christians and bring us together.

Communications could not only help address injustice and share information but were a way to deepen our ecumenical story, as the moderator shared in her report. The urgency of climate justice and peace in our global village, especially considering the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), needed to be emphasized. Youth leadership and increased visible communications were essential.

B. Report of the Executive Committee (GEN 02)

The communication committee expressed appreciation to the executive committee for their report.

C. Report of the Acting General Secretary (GEN 03)

The communications committee expressed appreciation to the acting general secretary for his report and commended the following responses for further consideration.

Members discussed the following section of the acting general secretary's report: "In the past, we said that the WCC was a faith-based organization. Now I would describe the WCC as a spiritual-based organization." Committee members invited further clarifications. Some found the reference to "spiritually-based" organization confusing, while others stated that this term was challenging.

With regard to his comments about the WCC being a spiritually-based organization, Fr Ioan said that there was a programme in WCC called "worship and spirituality". Spirituality was faith in action, a living faith, how we behaved and how we spoke. Coming from the Orthodox tradition, spirituality meant "life in Christ". It was not something that was divided from our faith in Jesus Christ according to the Scripture. This was an emphasis of what we were. This was how he had experienced the WCC in the last couple of years. This was also the feedback he had received from meetings with member churches and even with inter-faith partners. For him this was a discovery that those outside the WCC saw it as a spiritual organization rather than just a faith-based organization.

The following statement was discussed: "Our world needs love, reconciliation and unity more than ever. The focus on love and compassion – on reconciliation, unity, and healing – in the context of a global pandemic will mark this assembly in the history of the World Council of Churches." The committee recommended the inclusion of reparatory justice (before reconciliation).

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the focus on the Middle East was appreciated. There was an appreciation of the regard for others and the ecumenical discipline reflected in both the acting general secretary and the moderator's reports, especially given the challenges of hate speech and lack of human regard in much of the public discourse.

The committee affirmed the need to have a clear awareness that the COVID-19 virus ("the pandemic") was increasing and exposing previous inequalities and that all of us had a role to play in addressing this.

Bishop Yona Katoneene (Church of Uganda) affirmed the importance and significance of communication in this difficult period of COVID-19. He said that the WCC should encourage member churches to ensure that they had communications departments and that communication was seen as an integral part of the mission of the Church. On Sunday, he had participated in his local church service in Uganda and had shared the prayer and benediction provided to the central committee members. Following the service he was asked many questions about the WCC because the national television had broadcast the service live.

Broadcasting the services came with the COVID-19 restrictions on meeting in-person, so some good results had come out of the pandemic.

The presenters continued that communication on justice issues was more influential when expressed in a way everyone, including the younger generation, could understand, building solidarity among people in the world. Lowering the barriers to communication in society was an important communication strategy.

D. Update on Pilgrims on the Path to Peace (GEN COM 02) and Pilgrims on the Path of Peace – The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe (GEN COM 03)

The communications committee expressed appreciation for the thorough work that led to this comprehensive reflection of our WCC ecumenical work since Busan. The communications committee recognized the long process to arrive at this report that undergirded the WCC 11th Assembly.

The communications committee recommends that:

1. *The central committee **receive**, **discuss** and **approve** the progress report "From Busan to Karlsruhe."*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

2. *The central committee **approve** the report Pilgrims on the Path of Peace – The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe in its present form and **authorizes** minor editorial corrections at this communications committee and the addition of material on important decisions after the central committee meeting in February 2022.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

E. A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century Progress Report (GEN COM 06.1)
A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century (GEN COM 06.2)

The central committee, in June 2021, asked the acting general secretary to appoint a small group to prepare a new communications paper for the 21st century in preparation for the assembly, taking into account the results of the symposium on "Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age" (September 2021). The committee reviewed the document and commended it to the central committee for action.

The communications committee received the report with appreciation to those who worked on developing the new communications paper for the 21st century. In discussion, the following points were made by the communications committee for the future work of the WCC in this area:

- Should we talk about a digital "revolution" or rather "development?"
- It was essential to keep in mind both the positive and the negative aspects of digital technology.

The communications committee recommends that:

*3. The central committee **affirm** the document and further inputs of the communications committee for further work and presentation to the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

F. Conversations on the Pilgrim Way Communication Plan (GEN COM 04)

At the executive committee's request, a communication plan was prepared for the document Conversations on the Pilgrim Way. The communications committee also recommended that:

- Emphasis that the purpose of the resource, which was not an official policy of the WCC, was to encourage dialogue and reflection on the issues identified in GEN COM 04;
- The accompaniment of a reader's guide that helped the reader understand the purpose of the resource and the themes contained in the resource.

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou asked that if the document was not an official policy of the WCC, whether it was still under the umbrella of the council as it concerns a very sensitive matter for many of the churches. Ms Weibye responded that the document was intended to promote discussion amongst the fellowship but that it was not an official policy paper of the WCC.

Dr Quawas said that since this was not a policy paper, but just a resource document, there was no need for a "reader's guide". A reader's guide might bring new material which would then have to be approved by the governing bodies.

Ms Weibye said that the reader's guide had been recommended by the executive committee which was then communicated to the committee. She understood that the content of that reader's guide would be approved by the acting general secretary or in consultation with the LCC or the executive committee.

Dr Quawas insisted that the content of the reader's guide would have to be approved by the central committee. He added that he would not approve affirming the direction of the document and said it was unnecessary to have a communication plan on a resource document. He proposed to delete the recommendation.

Ms Weibye felt that if the document *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way* (GEN PRO 03.1) was received by the central committee, then because the document was sensitive in nature, it was important to consider carefully how it would be received by the fellowship. Thus there was need for a communication plan.

Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden), chair of the group working on the document, underlined that this was a resource document and not a policy document. Because it addressed sensitive issues, a communication plan would be helpful to avoid misunderstandings with regard to the aim of the document.

Regarding the earlier question, Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, deputy general secretary, affirmed that the idea for a reader's guide was a request from the executive committee rather than staff-driven. Ms Marianne Ejdersten, director of communications, confirmed that a communication plan had been requested by the executive committee in its meeting in 2018. For this reason it was now brought to the central committee.

Dr Kolovopoulou asked that this section of the communications report wait for the results of the report of the programme committee before any decision on a communications plan is made.

Bishop Katoneene said that the issues of human sexuality were divisive and had divided the Anglican Communion from which he comes. He asked where this discussion would lead the WCC. He felt that human sexuality should not be on the agenda of the World Council of Churches.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon felt that the formulation "invitation to journey together on mattes of human sexuality" was misleading. He suggested "in the future we could reflect concerning matters of human sexuality" as an alternative.

Rev. Silishebo Silishebo (United Church of Zambia) proposed that if procedure would allow, this discussion be postponed until the discussion of the document, for which this is a communication plan, takes place during the report of the programme committee.

Archbishop Wejryd agreed that it would be helpful to discuss the recommendation of the report of programme committee first. With a careful reading it can be seen that the document is not one-sided but quite balanced in its approach.

At the end of the discussion, it was agreed by consensus, to defer the discussion till after the presentation of the report of the programme committee.

The central committee returned to this matter on 15 February, following the presentation of the report of the programme committee, and H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a decision session. Ms Miriam Weibye said that a communication plan was suggested so that the Council was equipped to handle the sensitivity of the document. In the communications plan (GEN COM 04), it was underlined that the document *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way* (GEN PRO 03.1) was not intended to be a policy document. Rather it was designed to be a resource for those interested in the topic of human sexuality and to hold different conversations in various contexts. She read the recommendation again.

Dr Quawas suggested deferring the development of a communication plan to the in-person central committee meeting.

Archbishop Anders Wejryd stated that as the study document had been accepted, it was important to communicate the resource in a careful and considered way. For this reason the communications plan was necessary.

Dr Koukoura asked about the title: *"Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality"* and whether it could be changed.

Bishop Temple suggested deferring the decision on the communication plan if the committee had not yet received the document in the programme committee reporting.

Ms Evans said that in the programme committee discussion the central committee received the document *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way* by consensus. This was not deferred till another meeting. This resource document was now available to the member churches so a communication plan was needed.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul echoed the previous confirmation that the document had been received. She said that all were hoping for very careful communication, given the nature of the document. This was what the communications committee was asking for: a careful preparation of the plan.

Bishop Yona Katoneene agreed that this matter should be deferred so that consultation with the churches can take place.

Archbishop Wejryd affirmed that the document had been received so a communication plan was needed so that there would be no misunderstandings.

The communications committee recommends that:

*4. The central committee **affirm** the direction of the communication plan for the document Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality with the additional inputs of the communications committee.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

Dr Theodora Issa (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East), H.E. Archbishop Mor Dionysius John Kawak (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East) and Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) objected to this recommendation and asked that their objection be recorded.

G. Communication Plan for Ecumenical Diakonia Document (GEN COM 05)

The communications committee received the final version of the GEN COM 05 with appreciation and;

- Looked forward to the document being a primary resource at one of the Ecumenical Conversations addressing diakonia.
- Affirmed the excitement of specialized ministries to formally receive and use the document alongside of the WCC member churches and partners.
- The specific messaging to congregations of the member churches was encouraged especially at the assembly.

The communications committee recommends that:

5. *The central committee **affirm** the direction of the communication plan for the Ecumenical Diakonia document.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

H. Actions on Public Issues, since June 2018 (GEN COM 07)

The communications committee expressed appreciation for the extensive work of International Affairs and Public Issues Committees and governing bodies for both the substance of the work the collaborative nature with member churches, their partners and networks and the role of communications in the presentation and promotion of the work globally and evaluation of engagement.

The communications committee further recommended exploration of the following:

- Making more visible the collaborators and partners who conceived and developed the statements and their engagement with the statements in developing advocacy actions.
- Further consideration of ways in which there might be new or renewed tools and methods to determine the engagement and impact with and for WCC member churches and their partners.

The communications committee recommends that:

6. *The central committee **receive** the document as a record of action taken on public issues actions since the last meeting of the central committee in June 2018.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

I. Mandate of the communications committee (GEN NOM 2.1)

The communications committee discussed the proposed mandate of the communications committee as set out in GEN NOM 2.1, p. 36. The communications committee reviewed amendments to the proposed mandate, as suggested by the committee moderator and rapporteur in consultation with members of the Working Group on Constitution and Rules. The amendments were intended to strengthen the mandate whilst keeping it in line with the mandates of the other standing committees.

The communications committee approved the suggested amendments, and forwarded them to the Governance and Nominations Committee for action.

The first reading of the report of the communications was concluded. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the members and leadership of the communications committee and for the dynamic presentation of the report and the good discussion among the committee members.

The report of the communications committee concluded and the full report was received by consensus.

6.4. Report of the Policy Reference Committee

Bishop Sally Dyck, moderator of the policy reference committee, began by offering a huge thanks to the members of the committee. The committee met in a positive spirit with a full and engaged conversation on the issues.

The policy reference committee agenda included matters pertaining to the WCC relationships with other churches and ecumenical partners. The committee reviewed membership matters, the draft unity statement – to which much time was given – the report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration (PCCC), the report of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church and an update on the Global Christian Forum.

She thanked the Ven. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, rapporteur for the committee, and the staff for their helpful preparations. Dr Nathaniel presented the report.

Reports from the moderator, acting general secretary and executive committee
The committee discussed the address of the moderator (GEN 01) the report of the acting general secretary (GEN 03) and the report of the executive committee (GEN 02). It reviewed the reports from the perspective of our relationship as a fellowship of churches and partners in one ecumenical movement.

The committee appreciated the moderator's emphasis on the importance of building trust as well as her challenge to consider what we needed to take with us moving forward and what we should maybe leave behind. The moderator's report was praised for its emphasis on overcoming racism and xenophobia, identified as "demons of division". The moderator's strong Christological emphasis was appreciated and we quote: "Hence the theme of Christ's love, as it moves us to reconciliation and unity, could not have been more inspired, because to me it is divine, it is timely and it sums up all our programmes."

The committee appreciated the way in which the acting general secretary presented his report, framing it in the context of what we have learned during the pandemic, not only as a time of challenge, but as a deeply spiritual time for the churches and all humanity. The acting general secretary's affirmation of moving from a faith-based organization to a spiritual-based fellowship inspired a lot of conversation in the committee. Some felt this was a positive way to express a holistic view of faith in action. Others challenged the juxtaposition. The committee was of the opinion that the term spirituality needed further reflection in the context of being a global fellowship of churches. It was noted that issues of faith and spirituality were interrelated and therefore essential for the life and witness of the WCC. The report provided energy for the discussion. The committee thanked the acting general secretary for the monthly accountability reports, which kept the members of the central committee close to the work of the WCC.

The committee expressed its gratitude for the commitment and transparency of the executive committee in its work through the pandemic, providing leadership through a time of global crisis.

The policy reference committee recommends that:
1. *The central committee **receive** with appreciation the address of the moderator and **express** its gratitude for her leadership and commitment to the fellowship.*
2. *The central committee **receive** with appreciation the report of the acting general secretary and **express** its gratitude to him for strengthening the spiritual dimension of being a fellowship of churches.*
3. *The central committee **receive** with appreciation the report of the executive committee and **thank** them for their service during a time of global crisis.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration (PCCC)
The report and work of the permanent committee was presented by members of the central committee who serve on the PCCC (GEN PRC 04.1, 04.2 and 04.3).

The committee expressed appreciation for the emphasis on strengthening the ethos and practice of consensus, not simply as a way of making decisions, but as an expression of who

we were as a fellowship of churches and what we did together. Consensus helped ensure diverse voices were heard. The connection between consensus and spirituality was highlighted. Our prayer life and ecumenical spirituality helped to deepen our fellowship and strengthen our togetherness.

The emphasis on the assembly as an opportunity for education, training and growing into the experience and practice of consensus was appreciated. The committee noted that the report asked for closer collaboration between the PCCC and the Faith and Order Commission on specific topics, such as ecclesiology (WCC Rule IX.6.e).

The Policy Reference Committee recommends that:

4. *The central committee **receive** and **confirm** the recommendations in the report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration PCCC (2022) and **receive** the PCCC reports from 2019 and 2020 as appendices, noting that many recommendations are already being implemented.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

Draft Unity Statement

The committee was grateful for the participation of Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou, central committee member and moderator of the drafting group, and Rev. Dr Susan Durber, advisor to the central committee, moderator of the Faith and Order Commission and member of the drafting group. The committee noted the rich discussion in plenary and learned that the content of the chat was extracted and shared with the leadership of the drafting group.

The committee spent over one hour reviewing the draft unity statement (GEN PRC 03), asking questions for clarification and offering suggestions to the draft. In general the draft was appreciated for its starting point (Romans 8:38-39), its description of the world and the challenge or call to the churches to deepen their path to unity. The committee welcomed the draft as a fresh approach that uses pastoral language in response to the time in which we lived and reflecting the long journey of the fellowship of churches in belonging together.

The committee recommended strengthening the focus on being united together in truth and love, in reconciliation, healing and wholeness – seeking greater unity and closer fellowship. It was suggested that a reference to the Gospel of John could strengthen the focus on truth and love. Christ is truth and Christ is love – our unity was an expression of growing into Christ and revealing him to the world.

In the section on “today’s world”, the general reference to racism and casteism was challenged. It was more than “alienation”, it was sin, causing deep division in the human family. It was also suggested that nationalism for many was a source of profound suffering. It was affirmed that we must not accept violence in any form, in our homes, in our communities and between nations.

There was discussion on the footnote, which referred to disagreement at the 1961 New Delhi Assembly about its unity statement. The committee recommended that this be clarified in the text.

The committee discussed the phrase “our commitment remains passionate”, with some members feeling the need to strengthen this further with words such as compelled and urgent. In the discussion on “resistance”, the committee recommended a strong emphasis on action and impact, i.e. “Justice is love made public” (Cornell West) and resistance or taking a stand that led to transformation (*metanoia*). Some felt there should be more focus on human dignity. It was suggested the statement should include reference to transforming discipleship and abundant life for all, i.e. themes from the work of mission and evangelism.

Regarding the executive committee recommendation that additional people be added to the drafting group, the policy reference committee would emphasise the need to support the drafting group in what it needs, i.e. if they need more people or not.

Bishop Temple suggested that as the committee went into revising the document, it gave a thought to the idea of ecumenical formation. There seemed to be less enthusiasm for the ecumenical movement and for ecumenism among the young people. We had lost some of the emphasis on ecumenical formation.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios reminded the committee of the strong recommendation of the executive committee to enrich the group with a few more members in the next revision of the document. The policy reference committee did not respond very positively to this recommendation. This group was appointed by the former general secretary and was therefore accountable to the acting general secretary. He asked for clarification.

Bishop Dyck said that the committee did not reject the recommendation of the executive committee. Because there was not complete agreement on this recommendation among the members of the drafting group the policy reference committee stated that the drafting group should have what they need to complete the work. The narrative just recorded the exchange in the committee.

Dr Kolovopoulou echoed that there was no rejection of the executive committee recommendation. As the whole report of the executive committee had been accepted then this recommendation was also accepted.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon pointed out that the recommendations of the policy reference committee included the recommendation of the executive committee. The draft unity statement still needed improvement and the current text was not yet approved. The next step was to gather suggestions from the central committee with a deadline of the end of February. Then, under the guidance of the general secretary, the group was advised to co-opt a few others who could be helpful in improving the text. Then, at the next meeting of the executive committee, the statement could be given a final shape.

Fr Ioan added that the same process had been followed with the assembly theme paper. He understood that this draft unity statement was under his responsibility. He assured the committee that he would work with the group and then a good statement would come to the executive committee during its next meeting.

Rev. Dr Susan Durber added her assurances to the committee that the drafting group would take into account all the comments received to revise the statement. Dr Nathaniel agreed that very solid notes from the discussion had been passed on to the drafting group.

Bishop Dyck said that there was very good engagement on the part of the members in the discussion of the statement. There was a strong consensus that this was a draft and there was a great deal of encouragement to the drafters and excitement for the final statement as it evolves.

The Policy Reference Committee recommends that:

5. *The central committee **receive** the draft unity statement with gratitude to the drafting group for its work and the commitment with which it was undertaken.*
6. *The members of central committee, as requested by the executive committee, **offer** comments and suggestions on the draft until 28 February.*
7. *The central committee **ask** the drafting group to continue working on the draft unity statement in response to feedback received at this meeting and until the end of February.*
8. *The central committee **ask** the executive committee, at its next meeting, to finalize the draft and forward it to the 11th Assembly where it will be discussed, revised and issued as the unity statement of the assembly.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

Membership Matters

The committee reviewed the membership matters report (GEN PRC 02), noting that the membership applications received in June 2021 were ready for action by the central committee, having been agreed by both the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and the executive committee.

The committee welcomed the Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare Matilukuro, primate of The First African Church Mission (Nigeria). He expressed his gratitude on behalf of the church and affirmed that membership in the WCC would be a great blessing for his church and the WCC fellowship.

The committee also welcomed the leadership of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Dr Henri Weideman (president) and Rev. Selby Khumalo (general secretary). The president expressed that the church was looking forward to the final decision at this meeting of the central committee.

The policy reference committee affirmed that with both churches, “a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church” (Rule I.5).

The policy reference committee also reviewed the request of the Anglican Province of Alexandria to continue its membership in the WCC. The province was formed out of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East (member church since 1976), as the result of significant growth and development of the church in Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa – and not out of division. It became the 41st province of the Anglican Communion in June 2020. The committee noted that both the permanent committee on consensus and

collaboration and the executive committee recommended recognizing the continued membership of the Anglican Province of Alexandria.

The advisors from the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) both spoke in favour of recognizing the Anglican Province of Alexandria, which is a member of both the MECC and AACC.

The Policy Reference Committee recommends that:

9. *The central committee, having assessed there is consensus in favour of the application,* ***receive*** *The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) as a new member church of the World Council of Churches in accordance with Rule 1.5; and* ***invite*** *the church to send a delegation to the 11th Assembly.*
10. *The central committee, having assessed there is consensus in favour of the application,* ***receive*** *the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa as a new member church of the World Council of Churches in accordance with Rule 1.5; and* ***invite*** *the church to send a delegation to the 11th Assembly.*
11. *The central committee* ***recognize*** *the continued membership of the Anglican Province of Alexandria as a member church of the WCC that has experienced a change in structure, resulting in the creation of an independent province; and invite the church to send a delegation to the 11th Assembly.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church

The committee welcomed H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste, member of the central committee and co-moderator of the Joint Working Group, who introduced the report (GEN PRC 05). He described the mandate and work of the Joint Working Group. The title of the report, "*Walking, Praying and Working Together – An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*", reflected both WCC journey since the Busan Assembly and the visit of Pope Francis to Geneva in 2018. This was the tenth such report and described the collaboration between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church since the last assembly. It included a study on peacebuilding and a study on migration and refugees. The document was offered to the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church for reception and study.

Metropolitan Nifon referred to the suggestion that the work of the next group study the Apostolic Faith, inspired by the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council in 2025 (Nicea 325), not as an overlap with Faith and Order, but to strengthen the search for unity through our common journeys.

The committee also welcomed Rev. Fr Andrzej Choromanski, from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, advisor to the central committee and co-secretary of the Joint Working Group. He expressed gratitude for the commitment to the Joint Working Group as a unique instrument for collaboration between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, recognizing the important input on practical and pastoral concerns of the ecumenical movement.

The Policy Reference Committee recommends that:

12. *The central committee **receive** with appreciation the 10th Report of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church and **forward** it to the WCC 11th Assembly as a resource document.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

Global Christian Forum

The committee welcomed Rev. Dr Casely Essamuah, secretary of the Global Christian Forum (GCF) who provided a short video update on the Global Christian Forum (GEN PRC 06). He described the work of the GCF and the support of its four "pillars" – the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pentecostal World Fellowship. He provided an update on planning for the fourth global gathering in April 2024 and a series of regional gatherings in preparation.

Discussion recognized the importance and the journey of the GCF. The GCF was a contribution to receptive ecumenism, sharing faith stories and building relationships. The GCF was not an institution with members, but a forum for participation under the leadership of its four pillars. The GCF was challenged to include the voices of women in its video.

Dr Audeh Quawas, while fully supporting the GCF, insisted that it should be placed under the leadership of the WCC, rather than the four pillars, and therefore asked that his reservation to be recorded.

The acting general secretary said that he had been part of the discussions since the GCF was in formation. He had been responsible for a new memorandum of understanding which was signed and had been agreed upon by the executive committee in November 2018. Of course its origin was in the WCC and WCC was part of it but WCC did not manage the work of the Global Christian Forum. Apart from the four pillars there were also other members but the four pillars were responsible for the GCF. He added that it was impossible to put the Vatican under the leadership of the WCC but having the four pillar share in the management of the GCF including in contributing finances, had been agreed by all.

Dr Koukoura, as a representative of the WCC to the GCF, reported that the GCF was a platform, not a structured organization like the WCC. WCC had a strong voice in this platform, but it shared its voice with the others. This provided a flexibility for everybody to participate and to contribute towards moving to a vision towards cooperation and unity. This was a very fruitful initiative that should be supported by the WCC and the central committee. Following the signing of the memorandum of understanding the committee which oversaw the work had been very respectful to all the articles included. Within the four pillars, there were many churches represented that were also in the central committee and would be at the assembly. Many churches were not in the WCC fellowship and this showed that the ecumenical movement is wider than the WCC.

The Policy Reference Committee recommends that:

13. *The central committee **receive** the update on the Global Christian Forum with gratitude for the work of the forum in strengthening relationships across a broad spectrum of church traditions.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the members of the committee for their work, the leadership of the committee and the central committee members for their participation in the discussion. Bishop Dyck added her thanks to the staff who facilitated the conversation.

The full report was received by consensus.

6.5. Reception of New WCC Member Churches

Dr Agnes Abuom moderated a general session and asked Rev. Dr Benjamin Simon, programme executive for church and ecumenical relations, to guide the committee. He greeted the central committee and expressed great joy at welcoming the new member churches, the fellowship now including 352 WCC member churches.

The moderated added that it is always a joy to welcome new members. She invited the churches to say a word.

6.5.1. The First African Church Mission (Nigeria)

The Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare Matilukuro, primate of The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) expressed how delighted he was to have his church welcomed as a member in the largest Christian ecumenical body in the world. He assured the central committee of the church's esteem and appreciation and hoped the church's presence, as the first indigenous church in Africa founded by Africans, would be felt among the fellowship. He looked forward to the togetherness that they would share.

6.5.2. Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

The leadership of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Dr Henri Weideman (president) said that this was a historic day for the church, given the long history that the church had with WCC. He mentioned David du Plessis, former WCC staff and Pentecostal observer in several assemblies and Vatican II, from the church. He said that the current CCIA moderator, Rev. Dr Frank Chikane, was also a member of the church, and had been very involved in the life of the WCC for many years. He expressed gratefulness on the part of the church at being welcomed into this fellowship and organization. He hoped that the church would be enriched by the knowledge and experience of the WCC and hoped that the church would also be able to help to broaden the ecumenical experiences for the other churches in the WCC.

A round of applause took place to welcome the new member churches. The moderator expressed her happiness and welcomed the member churches to continue the journey together.

6.6. Closing Remarks, 14 February

Before the prayer, the moderator took the opportunity to thank the two vice-moderators, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios and Bishop Swenson for guiding the committee through the business of the day. She thanked the leadership of the finance, communications and policy reference committees whose reports were presented today. It was a joy to see the central committee making progress in its business. She hoped that even as the WCC numbers were reinforced, so also would be the energy, accompaniment, and solidarity with each other.

6.7. Closing Prayer, 14 February

The closing prayer included a prayer for reconciliation from the Uniting Church in Australia.

7. Plenary Session 15 February

7.1. Opening Prayer, Tuesday 15 February

The opening prayer service was based on the passage in John 21:15-19. The reflection was offered by Rev. Gloria Ulloa (Presbyterian Church of Colombia), WCC president from the Latin America and the Caribbean regions.

The scripture reading focused on a critical conversation between Jesus and Peter. Jesus made it clear that to follow Christ implies caring for, shepherding, tending the Lord's flock to the point of being willing to surrender one's life to that flock. The gospels narrated several of Peter's actions that portrayed him as zealous and impulsive as, on numerous occasions, he tried to defend or protect Jesus.

Jesus asked Simon three times about his love, about his true commitment to his flock. The greatest proof of love was to care for, to shepherd, to tend to Jesus' flock; it was not to protect Jesus. Peter had drawn his sword to protect Jesus but that was not what mattered to Jesus. It was the way Peter would care for his flock.

The call for the WCC today was therefore to listen to Jesus and ask ourselves about our love for him. Jesus invited us to love so deeply to the point where we could do what Peter did: care for God's flock, for the world, its people, its territories, its planet, life, water, fight against climate change, fight against economic powers of death, the powers that violently destroy life. God invited us, as he did with Peter, to love to the point of surrender our own lives for that saving love. She concluded by calling to tend to God's flock in such a way that "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" in the context of this pandemic, which had exacerbated ambition and injustice, and that strengthened our commitment to unity, reconciliation, and the well-being of our communities.

7.2. Report of the Governance and Nominations Committee (GEN NOM 09)

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a decision session. The acting general secretary confirmed quorum with 111 members and presidents present for the session.

Bishop Simo Peura gave an introduction to the report. He expressed his thanks to all members of the committee. It had not been easy to reach consensus on all the issues, however, a spirit of consensus proved stronger than the different views. He asked Rev. Karl Johnson, rapporteur for the committee, to present the report, focusing on the recommendations.

I. Moderator's Address (GEN 01)

The committee expressed its thanks to the moderator for her address and in particular for her emphasis on making Christ the centre of everything. The governance and nominations committee received the Moderator's Address with appreciation.

II. Report of the Executive Committee (GEN 02)

The committee affirmed its deep appreciation and thanks not only for the report of the executive committee but particularly for the commitment of the members and the work accomplished. The governance and nominations committee received the Report of the Executive Committee with appreciation.

III. Report of the Acting General Secretary (GEN 03)

The committee was grateful for the report of the acting general secretary and especially his description of the WCC as a "spiritually-based organization". The committee did not underestimate the challenges that come with trying to lead a global fellowship and Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca's "sure-footed" leadership and clear theological thinking were affirmed and valued by committee members. The governance and nominations committee received the Report of the Acting General Secretary with appreciation.

IV. Report of the Assembly Planning Committee, Oct 2021 (GEN NOM 03.1)

The report reflected the work done by the APC at its last meeting, focusing especially on the business of the assembly. Committees were proposed and described and recommendations were made to ensure that the business of the assembly ran as smoothly as possible. The APC further worked on the thematic plenaries to guarantee that the plenaries related to the assembly theme, related to each other and also reflected the biblical text each day.

The committee asked that it be noted in the Appendix 3 of the APC Report, "Tentative agenda for business plenaries", that the times marked in the schedule were still tentative and would only be confirmed at a later date.

Dr Enns suggested that if the central committee met again in June that the central committee approve the membership of the assembly committees. After some discussion, the recommendation was adjusted accordingly.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

1. *The central committee **receives** the report of the assembly planning committee and **confirms** its recommendations.*
2. *The central committee **proposes** that the assembly appoint six committees to prepare the business of the assembly – Message Committee, Programme Guidelines Committee, Policy Reference Committee, Finance Committee, Public Issues Committee and Nominations Committee; the composition of the committees will be nominated by the governing bodies and submitted to the assembly for final approval.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

V. Proposed Assembly Leadership and Plenary Speakers (GEN NOM 03.2)

The proposal for assembly leadership and plenary speakers (Appendix 5) was presented to the committee. The lists were compiled in consultation with the leadership of the central committee and were reviewed and adjusted at the last meeting of the executive committee. The acting general secretary confirmed that much work had gone into developing this slate of names, not only to have a good balance but also to name people who have the capacity to lead in the various roles.

The committee felt that even though the gender balance was to be commended, the other balances, especially in the leadership of the ecumenical conversations, could be better. It was acknowledged that if the churches did not submit names from diverse categories, it was a great challenge for the central committee to approve a diverse slate of names.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

3. *The central committee **approves** the proposed leadership of the assembly committees, with one change in finance committee leadership:*

   Assembly Finance Committee Moderator – Ms Lara Setrakian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin]) replacing the initial proposal of H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian from the same church.

4. *The central committee **approves** the proposed consensus facilitation team and ecumenical conversation leadership.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

VI. Preparing the Assembly in the Context of a Global Pandemic (GEN NOM 05)

A brief summary of the document and the ongoing process of monitoring was presented. The process included regular meetings between the leadership of the central committee and the leadership of the host committee to review the evolving situation. The different scenarios of how many participants could be accommodated at the venue depending on the types of restrictions currently in place during the assembly were explained. April 2022 was a critical moment with regard to accommodation contracts, budget considerations and the registration of participants. During the discussion it was clarified that the leadership of the central committee, in consultation with the executive committee, would make the decision on which scenario will be possible.

Members of the committee were reassured that every effort to obtain visas for delegates was already being made.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

5. *The central committee **recommends** that the regular monitoring, according to the established framework, continue, noting that April is a critical moment with regard to accommodation contracts, budget considerations and registration of participants.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

VII. Report of the Working Group on Constitution and Rules (GEN NOM 02), Proposed Amendments to the Constitution and Rules (GEN NOM 02.1), Proposed Amendments to the Supplement to the WCC Rules (GEN NOM 02.2), Addendum to the Report of the Working Group – Interpretive Notes (GEN NOM 02.3)

The moderator of the working group, Mrs Anne Glynn Mackoul, provided a short introduction to the report with a member of the group, Dr Audeh Quawas, also contributing to the presentation. The comprehensive work of the group was commended by the committee.

A recommendation on term limits of the executive committee (Rule VI.6.d) was received from a member of the central committee. It was underlined that in the period between the Porto Alegre and Busan assemblies there were lengthy discussions about this topic and the emerging consensus among members of the central committee should not be disregarded

and eventually lost. Clarifying the word “term” as meaning four years was welcomed by the committee. The common understanding of “term” was a period between two assemblies, until the proposed amendments were approved by the central committee. Committee members agreed that there was a need both for continuity and experience among executive committee members as well as increased participation by different member churches.

It was clear that further discussion was needed on this matter in order to reach a commonly accepted amendment.

The governance and nominations committee received a proposal from the communications committee for changes to the mandate of the communications committee (Rule X.8.) with gratitude and asked that it be kept for the next meeting when the proposed amendments would be addressed.

Dr Enns referred to the narrative section which says that there was consensus on the understanding of term as the period between two assemblies among the central committee. The sentence was adjusted to add the word “common”.

Ms Glynn-Mackoul appreciated that this issue was raised. She said that when the new section on mid-term elections of the executive committee had come into the rules, the terminology of term in the section on term limits had not been made consistent. In order to avoid confusion, the working group had proposed new language and an understanding of term as meaning four years.

Bishop Temple felt that as there was no consensus yet on term limits, it was clear that this issue needed more attention and consideration before a decision was made.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim proposed that, given the importance of the issue of climate change and climate justice, the WCC working group on climate change be named by the central committee rather than by the general secretary. This proposal was well received and would be addressed when the proposed amendments to the section on reference and advisory groups in the Supplement to the Rules was considered by the central committee.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

6. *The central committee **receives** the report of the working group on constitution and rules with appreciation.*
7. *The central committee **defers** decision on the proposed amendments to the rules and to the supplement to the rules, attached to this report as GEN NOM 02.1 and GEN NOM 02.2, to an in-person meeting of the central committee; and*
8. *The central committee **approves** the proposed amendments to the rules and the supplement to the rules, in a rule-by-rule, section by section process.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

VIII. Nominations (GEN NOM 04)

A. Central committee

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

*9. The central committee **approves** the replacement of Rev. Dr Staccato Powell (M/O) from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church by Bishop W. Darin Moore (M/O) from the same church.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

B. Assembly Nominations

The secretariat had received nominations from 308 member churches out of 349. The committee expressed its thanks to all the member churches which had sent in their delegations since the last meeting of the central committee.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

*10. The central committee **confirms** the delegates nominated by the member churches with appreciation; and **refers** nominations received after the central committee meeting to the executive committee for action.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

More requests from the member churches for additional delegates had been received by the secretariat since the last meeting of the central committee. Rule IV.1.a.iv stipulated that if a moderator or vice-moderator of the central committee were not already delegates to the assembly, they should be named as additional delegates.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

*11. The central committee **nominates** five (5) additional delegates as delegates to the 11th Assembly as named in GEN NOM 04.2 rev) including Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya), moderator of the central committee; and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (United Methodist Church), vice-moderator of the central committee, as delegates representing their respective churches.*

*12. The central committee **asks** the acting general secretary to solicit additional delegate proposals from Orthodox member churches, particularly to increase participation of women, youth, lay people, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities.*

*13. The central committee **closes** the process of naming additional delegates, with the exception of additional delegates from the Orthodox member churches and **asks** the secretariat to inform those pending additional delegates awaiting response from the WCC.*

*14. The central committee **refers** additional Orthodox delegates suggestions received after the central committee meeting to the executive committee for action.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

Since June 2021, the secretariat had received the nomination of 23 additional delegated representatives of ecumenical partners officially recognized by the central committee, cf. Appendix GEN NOM 04.3.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

*15. The central committee **receives** the delegated representatives nominated by ecumenical partners with appreciation; and refers nominations received after the central committee meeting to the executive committee for action.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

C. Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration

There were three vacancies on the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (PCCC). At its meeting in January 2022 the PCCC recommended that the central committee fill the vacancies from among the members of the central committee in accordance with Rule IX.4, and IX.2, describing the nomination and election process for both Orthodox and other members of the PCCC.

Rule IV.5.a. stipulates that if a co-moderator of the permanent committee was not a delegate to the assembly then he/she should be invited as an adviser to the assembly and its business committee.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

*16. The central committee **elects** the following members of the central committee to fill the vacancies on the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration according to rule IX.4:*

a) Rev. Karl Johnson, Jamaica Baptist Union (CA, Baptist) to replace Rev. Dr Paul Gardner (CA, Historic Peace Churches and Moravians)

b) Rev. Festus Ambe Asana, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (AF, Reformed) to replace the late Rev. Prof. Dr Mary Ann Plaatjies van Huffel (AF, Reformed)

c) Rev. Rainer Kiefer, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EU, United and Uniting) to replace Bishop Dr Christoph Meyns (EU, United and Uniting).

*17. The central committee **names** as an advisor to the assembly Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), co-moderator of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (PCCC).*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

D. Steering Committee for the Real Estate Development

Dr Viva Volkmann, advisor to the steering committee, had resigned because of additional duties. The EKD has suggested a replacement advisor.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

*18. The central committee **names** Dr Johannes Noltenius as an advisor to the steering committee on the real estate development project.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

IX. Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing By-Laws (GEN NOM 06)

Staff presented the history and process for the development of the by-laws of this newly proposed commission. In response to the WCC governing bodies' call to bring coherence to the health and healing work of the Council, and to foster deeper engagement of member churches, a new commission on health and healing was proposed.

A proposal was made in the committee that these by-laws, as well as the ones in section X below, be provisionally approved. The rationale for this proposal was that reviewing by-laws must be a thorough and careful process. Referring to the recommendation of the working group on constitution and rules, it was said that this process was better served during an in-person meeting. However, as it was important not to block the work of the commission on these important areas of WCC work, the committee felt the by-laws could go forward provisionally.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

19. *The central committee **provisionally approves** the by-laws of the newly established Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing.*
20. *The central committee **forwards** the by-laws of the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing for final revision and approval to the next in-person meeting of the central committee.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

X. Young People in the Ecumenical Movement (YPEM) Commission By-Laws (GEN NOM 07)

Mrs Celina Falk, member of the ECHOS commission, briefly presented the document. At its last commission meeting in 2019 the commission revised its by-laws to reflect a more prophetic approach to engaging young persons in the ecumenical movement. Stronger, more compelling terms were incorporated into the by-laws.

Ms Emily Jane Evans (Uniting Church in Australia) thanked the group for its recommendation of provisional approval of the by-laws. She asked that central committee members worked with their churches to ensure that younger people are proposed for all the commissions so that there would be enough young people for the YPEM Commission.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following actions:

21. *The central committee **provisionally approves** the revised by-laws of the commission, including the new name – Young People in the Ecumenical Movement (YPEM) Commission.*
22. *The central committee **forwards** the revised by-laws of the Young People in the Ecumenical Movement (YPEM) Commission for final revision and approval to the next in-person meeting of the central committee.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

XI. Gender Justice Principles (GEN NOM 08)

Ms Harriet Olson, moderator of the gender advisory group and Dr Gail Allan, member of the group, joined the committee to present the gender justice principles. Ms Olson said that the principles presented were proposed for WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions and reference groups. The concerns of gender equality went back a long way in the life of the WCC. The gender justice principles were rooted in the commitments WCC had already made to speaking and acting against injustice. They were grounded in the Bible and in theological reflection.

The advisory group was thanked for the work done on developing these principles and appreciation was also expressed of the rooting in the biblical creation story showing man and woman in partnership.

The governance and nominations committee suggests the following action:

*23. The central committee **approves** the WCC Gender Justice Principles document for WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions and reference groups.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the members of the committee and those involved in the presentation of the report.

The entire report of the committee was received by consensus.

7.3. Report of the Programme Committee

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios continued moderating a decision session and invited the moderator of the programme committee, Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber to present the report.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that because of the heavy agenda and tight time frame, only the recommendations were agreed by consensus in the committee meetings. The programme committee agreed to work on the narrative part of the report through email. She thanked the members of the programme committee for the good work on the many documents in an open, friendly and very engaged spirit. She heartily thanked the two rapporteurs and the staff for their support.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands), one of the rapporteurs, presented the committee's recommendations.

A. Moderator's Address (Doc. No. GEN 01)

1. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** the Moderator's Address with appreciation;*

*b. **thank** the moderator and the leadership of the central committee for their hard work under the special circumstances of the pandemic;*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

B. Report of the Acting General Secretary (Doc. No. GEN 03)

2. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** the report with appreciation;*

*b. **thank** the acting general secretary and his staff for all the work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

C. Report of the executive committee (GEN 02)

3. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** the report with appreciation;*

*b. **highlight** the resilience of the executive committee and the WCC staff in adapting to pandemic circumstances;*

*c. **thank** the executive committee for the work done*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

D. Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia Resource Document (GEN PRO 02.1) and Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia resource document Addendum (GEN PRO 02.2)

4. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receive*** *Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia and Addendum as a resource document for member churches and ecumenical partners;*
    b. ***thank*** *the Reference Group on Ecumenical Diakonia for the work done;*
    c. ***reaffirms*** *the importance of good cooperation between churches, ecumenical partners, ACT Alliance and the World Council of Churches in ecumenical diakonia;*
    d. ***affirm*** *this resource document as an important and useful document that helps churches to better serve God's people.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

E. Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality - A Resource for Reflection and Action (GEN PRO 03.1)

This section of the report of the programme committee was discussed at length. The members agreed that issues related to "human sexuality" could be divisive. Following a brief introduction from the narrative section, the proposal of the programme committee was read:

"The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

a. receives with appreciation the Conversations on the Pilgrim Way as a resource document for member churches and ecumenical partners interested in dialogue on issues of human sexuality;
b. re-affirm the need for the World Council of Churches to create safe spaces for moral discernment;
c. highlight that the approach of the pilgrimage of justice and peace (celebrating the gifts, visiting the wounds, transforming injustices) is a helpful approach for member churches to deal with delicate questions such as the questions on human sexuality;
d. thank the Reference Group on Human Sexuality on the work done."

Several members from the Orthodox tradition and from some churches in Africa expressed their hesitation at discussing the resource document. Bishop Yona Katoneene (Church of Uganda) asked what creating safe space in WCC meant when WCC was composed of member churches which might have already taken positions on this issue.

Prof. Dr Very Rev. Jack Khalil (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) said that he and two other central committee members: Dr Theodora Issa (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East) and Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Cilicia]), Orthodox members of programme committee, had sent an email to the programme committee explaining several objections to these recommendations. He said that the position expressed was not recorded in the programme committee report. The text of this email is available in Appendix 4.

The rapporteur of the programme committee, Rev. Karin van den Broeke said there had been some confusion about the status of the email from the three members as several mails had been received, some before and some after the deadline established by the committee. She and the moderator of the programme committee, Bishop Petra Bosse Huber (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) apologized for not having understood what was intended to be included from the various communications with the committee.

Several members questioned the label of "resource document". It was explained that the document was meant to be a resource for those churches and ecumenical partners who were interested in this topic. It was not meant to be a formal study document for the churches nor a policy of the WCC. Seeing this document as a resource had seemed like a wise way forward for this sensitive topic.

Bishop Arnold Temple (Methodist Church Sierra Leone) said that the issue of human sexuality should be treated with the sensitivity it carried. He noted that for churches in Africa this was highly sensitive and was causing splits in various denominations.

Through the written chat, Prof. Dr Georges Tamer (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) proposed that this question be postponed until the next meeting of the central committee. There was no consensus on this proposal among the members.

With regard to the recommendation (b above) to re-affirm the need for the World Council of Churches to create safe spaces for moral discernment there was a long discussion among the central committee members. Prof. Dr Dimitra Koukoura (Ecumenical Patriarchate) reminded the central committee of the long work done by the Faith and Order Commission working group on moral discernment.

Some members thought that any such space could be provided within and by those member churches who would like to do this and that there was no need for the WCC to create such a space for its members and ecumenical partners. Dr Audeh Quawas (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem) proposed that this space be for churches that are interested in these issues but that it should not be a WCC space. Each church has its way of addressing the subject and WCC did not need to provide a space.

For other members, such as Rev. Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ), the WCC was a diverse community made up of churches with differing opinions and doctrines. WCC had intentionally made safe space around other issues and human sexuality was one of many such issues. Being a fellowship of churches did not mean we all had to have the same opinion on an issue, it meant we had agreed to journey together in the spirit of Christ. She referred to the discussion on love in the draft unity statement and felt it was antithetical to that discussion if we said we could not talk about creating safe spaces.

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) stated that the proposal from Dr Quawas did not exclude dialogue but safeguarded the context of this dialogue for churches for which this issue was very sensitive. During the discussions H.E. Metropolitan Nikkola of Apolonia and Fier (Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania) also voiced his support for the proposal from Dr Quawas.

Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden) reminded the group that the work done on this document was not a task invented by a few people, but rather it was a task given to the central committee by the Busan Assembly, and that the document had been available for a long time. The reference group tried to present this discussion in a manner so that the more liberal churches would have more respect for the more conservative churches. The group struggled to show the complexities and the challenges and to raise the level of dialogue, rather than push one agenda or another.

Rev. Dr Prof. Yang-En Cheng (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan) said that the programme committee's proposal was to promote a conversation and safe space for all kinds of opinions which is the spirit of the ecumenical movement. He added that human sexuality is not just an issue or a problem, but such discussions affect real living people, human beings who, like us, needed the grace of God.

Fr Jack Khalil said that the text failed to provide the biblical background to this discussion and mixed the subject of sexual violence with sexual minority groups. He did not understand the connection. He felt that opinions of each tradition should be respected in such documents and that it was not ecumenical to just accept anything.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa) said that WCC did not need to lead this discussion. Each church, like the Orthodox, who might be just beginning to talk about these issues, was free to do what it wanted. It was important to express our respect to what every church thought is better for its own congregations.

Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Cilicia]) agreed that this was a very sensitive topic and added that addressing sensitive topics took time. He felt that the programme committee and its moderator did an incredible job of leading us through this document. However, just as in other committees, time was short in general, and there was not enough time to delve into sensitive yet important topics. The Busan assembly said that controversial themes should have a safe space and although these issues were sensitive they were urgent for the world today. Time was needed for the emergence of such a safe space, but every time this topic comes to the floor the response was "we don't have enough time" to express our views, our concerns. In this meeting as well, there was not enough time for programme committee discussion and drafting allocated during this online meeting of the central committee.

Rev. Silishebo Silishebo (United Church of Zambia) said that the proposal on the table significantly changed the meaning of the original proposal for a safe space in the WCC, not in individual churches. He was not ready to support this and though it would be good to defer this whole discussion to the next central committee meeting to ensure proper preparation and polishing up of the content. In response to this, Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, pleaded with the group not to postpone this discussion as it had already gone on for years.

Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland), a member of the programme committee, did not agree to change the recommendation, but said he would stand aside if the body wanted changes.

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church) agreed that it would not be good to postpone decisions on this document. He made a suggestion that the body consider deleting recommendation on creating a safe space but keep the other recommendations:

"that the central committee:

a. receives with appreciation the Conversations on the Pilgrim Way as a resource document for member churches and ecumenical partners interested in dialogue on issues of human sexuality;
~~b. re-affirm the need for the World Council of Churches to create safe spaces for moral discernment;~~
c. highlight that the approach of the pilgrimage of justice and peace (celebrating the gifts, visiting the wounds, transforming injustices) is a helpful approach for member churches to deal with delicate questions such as the questions on human sexuality;
d. thank the Reference Group on Human Sexuality on the work done."

Mr Georges Lemopoulos, consensus consultant, suggested

b. re-affirm the need for the World Council of Churches to create safe spaces for moral discernment <u>for those churches who would like to dialogue with one another, and consult with one another</u>;

The moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya) agreed with the proposal.

Bishop Yona Katoneene felt that this new proposal did not change the original spirit of the recommendation as proposed by the programme committee. This safe space should not be in the WCC but rather that churches who wanted, could organize themselves outside the WCC. If the safe space was within the WCC then these issues were on the agenda of the WCC and this was a big problem for some of the member churches.

In a discussion on the verbs used, Dr Kolovopoulou reminded the group that the narrative of the communication committee report said that this was not a policy of the WCC. She felt that if the recommendation included "the need of the WCC" then it became a kind of policy. If the recommendation said "uphold" or "recognize" the need for "member churches of the WCC", then she would support it.

Dr Enns observed that the churches did not need the WCC central committee to recommend to each of the churches to create its own safe space for itself. The WCC could create a safe space for those churches in need of moral discernment, for those churches who were willing to hold each other accountable in moral discernment (not only on issues of human sexuality but other issues too). If the council was not willing to do this, the WCC did not need to tell our churches that "we can create a safe space for ourselves". This was not the idea of the ecumenical fellowship.

Ms Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) referred the group to the chat where Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, deputy general secretary, had quoted the text from the Busan Assembly:

> "At the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in response to the issues raised during the ecumenical conversations, business sessions and other presentations regarding the challenges that issues of human sexuality pose to WCC member churches and its constituencies, the assembly through the Programme Guidelines Committee made the following recommendation:
>
> Being aware of divisive issues among churches, the WCC can function as a safe space to enter into dialogue and moral discernment on matters which the churches find challenging. Examples which have been heard strongly in this assembly include questions of gender and human sexuality. Controversial issues have their place within that safe space on the common agenda, remembering that tolerance is not enough, but the baseline is love and mutual respect."

Ms Glynn-Mackoul said that the assembly set the strategic direction and the central committee could not go back and change the direction of the decision by all the delegates gathered at the Busan assembly. She thought that the reference group on human sexuality had done its work and that this document was thoughtful, broad, and not something to be put in a drawer. The current discussion was going in the direction of tying the hands of the churches together to engage in moral discernment. She did not understand how the central committee was going back behind the considered judgement of the assembly. She added that this kind of discussion was difficult in an electronic meeting and might be better held in an in-person meeting.

Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel (Church of England) felt that creating safe spaces did not harm anyone and that the original recommendation should not be watered down.

Dr Abuom referred to Mrs Glynn-Mackoul's intervention that this was one of those issues that needed discussion in-person. The document had not been read by all the members. It was important to make sure that the document was actually read. She suggested that the matter be postponed.

Following the comments of the moderator of the central committee, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios proposed to the central committee that the matter be postponed due to the complicated nature of meeting online. He added that a postponement did not mean that the issues would be forgotten, but only that they would be addressed at an in-person meeting where there would be more time to exchange views.

Ms Celina Falk (Church of Sweden) spoke against the proposal given that it was not sure that another in-person meeting could take place before the assembly. In addition, it would be difficult to begin this discussion again with a new central committee after the assembly.

The body did not agree on this proposal to postpone the discussion to the next central committee meeting.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke proposed to the group to remove the recommendations b and c and then move on.

"that the central committee:

a. receive with appreciation the Conversations on the Pilgrim Way as a resource document for member churches and ecumenical partners interested in dialogue on issues of human sexuality;
~~b. re-affirm the need for the World Council of Churches to create safe spaces for moral discernment;~~
~~c. highlight that the approach of the pilgrimage of justice and peace (celebrating the gifts, visiting the wounds, transforming injustices) is a helpful approach for member churches to deal with delicate questions such as the questions on human sexuality;~~
d. thank the Reference Group on Human Sexuality on the work done."

Since the email by the three central committee members had not been seen by all the members of the central committee, the text could not be included in the report of the programme committee. Fr Jack Khalil asked that the remarks sent by email be included in the minutes so that their comments and objections are recorded. This was agreed.

Many members indicated "blue cards" on the screen and in the chat as to the removal of sections (b) and (c) from the recommendations.

Prof. Dr Enns summarized the status of the discussion: there was consensus to approve two recommendations of the Programme Committee (a and d above), but there was no consensus on the original two recommendations that were deleted (the original b and c above). This needed to be clearly recorded in the minutes. Procedurally, if there was no consensus on a recommendation, the recommendation was not accepted. He asked that the minutes record the decision and report the discussion that took place around the role of the WCC in providing safe spaces for discussion among the member churches.

Bishop Bosse-Huber asked the central committee to be serious about the work of the programme committee. For years and years this question had been addressed. If the central committee did not accept the recommendations, it would be unfortunate given all the energy invested so far. However she expressed strongly that the work of the reference group and the others who have worked on this document should not be made invisible.

The following text was presented for action:

The Programme committee recommends that the central committee:

a. receive with appreciation the Conversations on the Pilgrim Way as a resource document for member churches and ecumenical partners interested in dialogue on issues of human sexuality;
b. thank the Reference Group on Human Sexuality on the work done."

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

Objections to the approval of the recommendations were registered by Dr Theodora Issa (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East), Prof. Dr Very Rev. Jack Khalil (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East), and Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Cilicia]).

F. Report of the Gender Advisory Group (GEN PRO 04)

After the reading of the recommendations, Ms Glynn-Mackoul noted that the document was received by the programme committee for information. In the recommendations presented by the programme committee, there was note on establishing a reference group on gender justice. This was discussed in the executive committee meeting. Including the note in the recommendations to the central committee, this made it seem like the central committee was affirming those recommendations from the gender advisory group report. She did not feel like the central committee had had the discussion on establishing such a group yet. She proposed that this note be removed from the recommendations to the central committee.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that the committee had the intention of underlining how important the work on gender justice is for the Council. She agreed to remove the note.

5. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receives*** *the report of the Gender Advisory Group (GEN PRO 04) with appreciation;*
    b. ***thanks*** *the Gender Advisory Group on the work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

G. Proposal for a Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing (GEN PRO 05)

Dr Quawas expressed some reluctance on establishing a working group at this time, right before the term of the central commit concludes and the assembly takes place. Bishop Bosse-Huber said that, with the impacts of the pandemic, there is a new understanding of the injustices in health care. The committee felt this should be underlined and having a working group seemed like a relatively easy way to mark the importance of the issues. However, because of the need to be clear with mandates of groups, she agreed that the group could be brought together after the assembly. This change was incorporated into the recommendations. Dr Phiri affirmed that the formation of the commission could only take place after the assembly, and that the working group was meant to be formed after the assembly as well.

6. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receive*** *with appreciation the 'Proposal for a Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing' (GEN PRO 05),*
    b. ***approve*** *the reconfiguration of WCC programmatic work on health and the establishment of a Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing;*
    c. ***ask*** *the general secretary to establish a working group after the assembly on health justice, addressing the questions of racism as a part of this injustice;*
    d. ***thank*** *the acting general secretary for ongoing commitment to find the right structure for this important work.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

H. Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship A Resource Document (GEN PRO 06.1) and the Report of the Reference Group, Theological Study Group and Harvest Gathering (GEN PRO 06.2)

Dr Quawas congratulated the programme committee for the recommendation encouraging member churches and ecumenical partners to use it as a resource document. This kind of recommendation could be helpful for the document on human sexuality.

7. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receive*** *with appreciation the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship A Resource Document (GEN PRO 06.1) and the Report of the Reference Group, Theological Study Group and Harvest Gathering (GEN PRO 06.2);*
    b. ***encourage*** *member churches and ecumenical partners to use it as a resource document;*
    c. ***ask*** *the general secretary to make the harvest of the women's pilgrim team visits more visible;*
    d. ***ask*** *the general secretary in consultation with the RG to develop a proposal for the assembly on how to continue the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace after the assembly;*
    e. ***note*** *the emerging themes (truth and trauma; land and displacement; gender justice, racial justice and health and healing) and of the discovered need to engage in climate justice, to decolonize churches and ecumenical spaces and to walk new ways;*
    f. ***underline*** *the necessity to focus on racism as a transversal for our programmatic work and to add the focus on the position of indigenous people in this transversal;*
    g. ***affirm*** *the use of the documents as background information for the relevant ecumenical conversations at the assembly;*
    h. ***note*** *the recommendations mentioned in GEN PRO 06.2;*
    i. ***thank*** *the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Reference Group and the Theological Study Group for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

I. Commission of the Churches on International Affairs Summary Report 2019, Bali (GEN PRO 07.1); CCIA Summary Report 2020, Brisbane (GEN PRO 07.2) and CCIA Summary Report 2021, Johannesburg (GEN PRO 07.3)

Rev. Fr Stefan Igumnov (Russian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate]) asked that the paragraph in the narrative of the programme committee report regarding Ukraine, Belarus and Russia be removed as it had no substantial information and could be seen as too political.

Mrs Margarita Nelyubova (Russian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate]) said that she was a member of the programme committee and when this paragraph came to the narrative she had objected to its inclusion in the report. She added that Archpriest Mykola Danylevych (Russian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate]) from Ukraine had also sent in his objection

to the programme committee. There is no reason for this paragraph to be included if the central committee members from the concerned member church did not agree.

Bishop Eva Brunne (Church of Sweden) felt that it was important to write down what was said in the meeting as part of the narrative. She said that the point of the paragraph was that these matters did not fall into the mandate of the programme committee.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that the narrative is just to show the discussion which took place in the programme committee. It was a clear intention to include the fact that this was not an issue for the programme committee. There was no decision by the programme committee but the issue was discussed.

Very Rev. Mikhail Goundiaev (Russian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate]) asked what the relation of this paragraph was to the work of the CCIA and to the document on which the programme committee was having its discussion. The content of the paragraph has nothing to do with the CCIA reports presented to the programme committee. He noted that there had been a recent statement by the general secretary so it is not true that the WCC does not respond to difficult situations. He felt, however, that this paragraph was out of place in this context and supported the proposal to remove it from the narrative.

Rev. Cynthia Kent said that, although she was not a member of the programme committee, if an issue comes to the discussion in a standing committee, it is important to record this so the full central committee is aware of the matters being discussed.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested referring to the importance of the statement made by the general secretary.

Dr Koukoura, a member of the programme committee, noted that the whole style of the paragraph was just a description of what was said. However, if the brothers and sisters from the countries concerned were not in agreement, then this had to be taken seriously.

Rev. Silishebo agreed with the proposal to remove the paragraph.

Dr Enns said that, as a member of the programme committee, he fully understood the sensitivity of the issue. He was glad for the presence of Mrs Nelyubova in the committee who helped the committee understand it. To provide some background, this paragraph simply reflected the deep concern about peace in Europe, peace in Ukraine, peace with Russia, etc. In response to the question about why it came up during the discussion of the CCIA reports, the programme committee regretted that the public issues committee of the central committee was not meeting, where such issues would normally be discussed. If this was not acceptable to the churches in the countries, then the paragraph should be removed. However, it was meant to show a deep concern for peace in the region.

Fr Igumnov said the paragraph reflected the messages of the mass media and not the actual situation. While he recognized that there was tension in Ukraine, he affirmed there was no situation in Russia or Belarus. If the central committee wanted to give a signal about peace then there should be a statement on tensions between West and East, or tensions with the

mass media. Such a message would be very different from this paragraph. For this reason he thought it would be easier to delete the paragraph entirely.

Dr Andar Parlindungan (Huria Kristen Batak Protestan [HKBP]) appreciated the work of the programme committee. He said that although he did not believe that deleting the paragraph was the right decision, he hoped that a new paragraph, drafted in cooperation with the Russian brothers and sisters could be included in the narrative.

The moderator called on the consensus consultant, Mr Georges Lemopoulos, for some assistance in bringing the matter to a close. He stated that this was a paragraph in the narrative part of a report. Indeed, it was a record of the discussion in the committee. However, it was not a matter of a policy decision. In order to move ahead to other important matters for decision, it would help if the paragraph were removed. This would enable the central committee to move forward.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken said that too much time had been spent on this. The paragraph should be deleted even as we continued to pray for peace in the region.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim noted that it was a practice of the WCC, that when something was to be said about a situation, the voice of the local church was respected. This should also be the case in this situation.

Bishop Temple felt that something should be said about justice and peace in the region even if the paragraph were deleted.

The members from the Russian Orthodox Church were asked to bring back a proposed paragraph later in the session. This was agreed. When the committee came back to this matter, Mrs Nelyubova, reiterated the initial proposal to delete the paragraph and not replace it with another one. She added that in the programme committee there had been no extensive discussion on this, just a few comments. The current discussion in plenary had taken much more time than the brief comments made during the meeting of the programme committee itself.

Bishop Bosse-Huber agreed that the paragraph be deleted.

This decision to remove the paragraph was approved by consensus.

After this discussion, the committee went back to the three reports of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

8. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receive*** *with appreciation the three reports of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs;*
    b. ***thank*** *the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

J. Arusha Report, 2018 (GEN PRO 08.1), Report of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 2019, Helsinki (GEN PRO 08.2), and CWME Highlights 2019-2021 (GEN PRO 08.3)

9. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** with appreciation the three reports of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism;*

*b. **reaffirm** the importance of the Arusha call for transforming discipleship for member churches;*

*c. **thank** the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

K. Highlights of the Faith and Order Commission 2019, Nanjing (GEN PRO 09.1); Commission on Faith and Order Highlights 2019-2021 (GEN PRO 09.2), and Proposal for Faith and Order World Conference (GEN PRO 09.3)

The programme committee highlighted that this conference should be a key World Council of Churches event, commemorating our common past and witnessing the meaning of faith in our current context. The world conference Nicea 2025 would be a main WCC event in between its next assemblies, marking the anniversary of the first ecumenical council and focused on (1) the churches' growth in the common understanding of the apostolic Faith, and (2) its significance for the mission and unity of the churches in today's and tomorrow's world.

10. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** with appreciation the three reports of the Faith and Order Commission;*

*b. **approve** the proposal for a Faith and Order World Conference "Nicea 2025" to commemorate the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council;*

*c. **thank** the Faith and Order Commission for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

L. Report of the Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) Commission, 2019 (GEN PRO 10)

11. The programme committee recommends that the central committee:

*a. **receive** with appreciation the Report of the Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) Commission, 2019 (GEN PRO 10);*

*b. **note** the recommendations in the report;*

*c. **thank** the Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) Commission for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

M. Report of the ECHOS Commission on Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement (GEN PRO 11)

The programme committee received and discussed the report of the ECHOS Commission meeting held in Seoul in 2019 which was part of the pilgrimage of justice and peace with the churches on the Korean Peninsula. The programme committee noted that the by-laws drafted at this meeting had been presented to the WCC Governance and Nomination Committee for approval.

The programme committee appreciated the variety of activities by the ECHOS commission and recognized that those young people that were appointed in Busan grew in experience and in age. Their experience and their prophetic voices were very much appreciated in different areas of the WCC-work. The committee encouraged the commission to reiterate the engagement and contribution of young people in the WCC-work and in the churches.

Recommendations

12. *The programme committee recommends that the central committee:*
    a. ***receive*** *with appreciation the report of the ECHOS Commission on Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement (GEN PRO 11)*
    b. ***thank*** *the ECHOS Commission for the excellent work done.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

The report of the programme committee was received by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the leadership and the members of the programme committee as well as the central committee members for their active engagement in the discussion.

Bishop Yona Katoneene asked about the recommendations from the Africa regional meeting for public issues statements on Nigeria and South Sudan and how this would be followed up. Rev. Prof Dr Ioan Sauca reminded the members that it was decided that no public issue statements would be addressed during this online central committee meeting. Any requests for addressing burning issues could be addressed to the secretariat and would be followed up. The two mentioned here could be addressed through statements of the general secretary.

7.4. Closing Remarks, Tuesday, 15 February

Before going in to the closed session, Dr Agnes Abuom, on behalf of the leadership, expressed her appreciation for the many people who had made this second online meeting of the WCC central committee possible. The meeting had included a lot of debate and the discussion was fruitful.

She thanked the

- Central committee members
- Substitutes who stood in for those who could not make it
- WCC presidents
- Standing committee leadership, the moderators and rapporteurs
- Advisors representing the Christian world communions, specialized ministries and the regional ecumenical organizations
- Advisors from the commissions
- Youth advisors
- Advisors from the newly accepted member churches
- Consensus consultant
- Recorders
- Stewards who worked behind the scenes
- Prayer leaders
- Interpreters and translators and the

- Staff under the leadership of the acting general secretary.

She added her personal thanks to the vice-moderators, H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson.

7.5. Closing Prayer, Tuesday, 15 February

The closing prayer, an abridged version, was led by the Bossey students and included intercessions from the ecumenical prayer cycle.

7.6. Closed Session

The central committee then moved into a closed session.

The minutes of the closed session are kept separately in the WCC archives.

APPENDIX 1 – List of Participants

Leadership of the Central Committee

Dr Agnes ABUOM	Anglican Church of Kenya
H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr GENNADIOS OF SASSIMA	Ecumenical Patriarchate
Bishop Mary Ann SWENSON	United Methodist Church
Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan SAUCA	Romanian Orthodox Church

Presidents

Rev. Dr Sang CHANG	Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Archbishop Mark MACDONALD	Anglican Church of Canada
Rev. Gloria ULLOA ALVARADO	Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia
Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders WEJRYD	Church of Sweden

Members

Bishop Alan Francis ABERNETHY	Church of Ireland
H.G. Bishop ABRAHAM	Coptic Orthodox Church
Mr Joyanta ADHIKARI	Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha
Rev. Abednego ADINUGROHO	Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW)
Very Rev. Dr Artur ALEKSIEJUK	Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Rev. Eddy ALEMÁN	Reformed Church in America
H.G. Archbishop ALEXANDER OF DALLAS	Orthodox Church in America
H.E. Archbishop ANGAELOS	Coptic Orthodox Church
Rev. Cora Luisa ANTONIO MATAMOROS	Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua
Ms Iveta APOSTU	Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
Rev. Festus Ambe ASANA	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Ms Kirsten AUKEN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken AYKAZIAN	Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
Rev. Dr Samson Olasupo Adeniyi AYOKUNLE	Nigerian Baptist Convention
Bishop Samuel Robert AZARIAH	Church of Pakistan
Rev. Dr Hyunju BAE	Presbyterian Church of Korea
Bishop Petra BOSSE-HUBER	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Rev. Marianne H. BREKKEN	Church of Norway
Bishop Eva BRUNNE	Church of Sweden
Rev. Dr Sofia CAMNERIN	Uniting Church in Sweden
Rt Rev. Dhiloraj Ranjit CANAGASABEY	Church of Ceylon
Rev. Dr Jeffrey CARTER	Church of the Brethren
Rev. Michel CHARBONNIER	Waldensian Church
Rev. Dr Prof. Yang-en CHENG	Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
Bishop M. A. DANIEL	Methodist Church in India
Mr Elisama Wani DANIEL	Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan

Rev. Yonas Yigezu DIBISA	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Prof. Jeffrey DUDIAK	Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Bishop Sally DYCK	United Methodist Church
Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando ENNS	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland
Ms Emily Jane EVANS	Uniting Church in Australia
Mrs Celina FALK	Church of Sweden
Rev. Serge FORNEROD	Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz EKS
Ms Anne GLYNN-MACKOUL	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Very Rev. Mikhail GOUNDIAEV	Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Rev. Anne HEITMANN	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Rev. Dr Henriette HUTABARAT-LEBANG	Gereja Toraja
Rev. Fr Stefan IGUMNOV	Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Dr Theodora ISSA	Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Bishop Teresa JEFFERSON-SNORTON	Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Mr Andrej JEFTIĆ	Serbian Orthodox Church
Rev. Karl JOHNSON	Jamaica Baptist Union
Mrs Tagolyn KABEKABE	Church of Melanesia
Rev. Baoping KAN	China Christian Council
H.E. Archbishop Mor Dionysius John KAWAK	Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Rev. Cynthia KENT	United Methodist Church
Prof. Dr Very Rev. Jack KHALIL	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Rev. Rainer KIEFER	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Prof. Dr Marina KOLOVOPOULOU	Church of Greece
Ms Judith KÖNIGSDÖRFER	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Rev. Martina Viktorie KOPECKÁ	Czechoslovak Hussite Church
Prof. Dr Dimitra KOUKOURA	Ecumenical Patriarchate
Rev. Dr Elisabeth KRAUSE-VILMAR	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Rev. KRISTI	Gereja-Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ)
H.E. Metropolitan Serafim KYKOTIS	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa
Rev. Everdith Yaritza LANDRAU	Presbyterian Church (USA)
Mrs Elenor I. LAWRENCE	Church in the Province of the West Indies
Rév. Nadou-Madje Martine Grace LAWSON-LATE ZINSOU	Eglise méthodiste du Togo
Rev. Dr Manhong LIN	China Christian Council
Rev. Tafue M. LUSAMA	Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
Mrs Marceline MBINGASANI MALUAVANGA	Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté baptiste du Congo

H.E. Dr Archbishop Abune Aregawi MELESE	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Mr Philip MODAYIL MANI	Church of South India
Rev. Sarah MOORE	United Reformed Church
Bishop Jonah Katoneene MWESIGWA	Church of Uganda
Rev. Canon Dr Leslie NATHANIEL	Church of England
Rev. Jeanne Françoise NDIMUBAKUNZI	Eglise Anglicane du Burundi
Mrs Margarita NELYUBOVA	Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr NIFON OF TARGOVISTE	Romanian Orthodox Church
H.E. Metropolitan NIKKOLA OF APOLONIA AND FIER	Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
Rt Rev. Dr Renta NISHIHARA	Anglican Church in Japan
Rev. Astride NTUMBA MAYAMBA	Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne de Kinshasa
Mag. Elisabeth PAUSZ	Evangelische Kirche A. und H.B. in Österreich
Mr Carlos PEÑA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Bishop Emerita Sofie PETERSEN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
Bishop Simo PEURA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Very Rev. Archimandrite PHILARET	Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Bishop Dr Isaac Mar PHILOXENOS	Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar
Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry PILLAY	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
Ms Teny PIRRI-SIMONIAN	Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia)
Rev. Dr Tyrone S. PITTS	Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Ms Roma Ann Nisha PRODHAN	Church of North India
Dr Audeh B. QUAWAS	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem
Dr Ann K. RIGGS	Religious Society of Friends: Friends General Conference
Rev. Dr Rangarirai RUTORO	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
Rev. Canon Aida Consuelo SANCHEZ-NAVARRO	The Episcopal Church
Rev. Laurent SCHLUMBERGER	Eglise protestante unie de France
Rev. Emma Essie Dzoe SEPAH	Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana
Bishop Dr Daniel Jensen SEYENKULO	Lutheran Church in Liberia
Rev. Silishebo SILISHEBO	United Church of Zambia
Rev. Miriam SPIES	United Church of Canada
Very Rev. Fr. Hrant TAHANIAN	Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia)
Prof. Dr Georges TAMER	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Rev. Tauno TEDER	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Rt Rev. Arnold C. TEMPLE	Methodist Church Sierra Leone
Rev. Dr Karen Georgia THOMPSON	United Church of Christ
Dr Diana TSAGHIKYAN	Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
The Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah UDOFIA	The African Church

Rev. Karin VAN DEN BROEKE	Protestant Church in the Netherlands
H.E. Metropolitan Dr VASILIOS OF CONSTANTIA - AMMOCHOSTOS	Church of Cyprus
Mrs Ana María VELILLA DE MEDIO	Iglesia Evangélica de los Discipulos de Cristo
Archbishop Dr Joris VERCAMMEN	Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands
Mr Samuel Nderi WAIRIMU	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
Rev. Dr Angélique WALKER-SMITH	National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.
Ms Miriam Jane WEIBYE	Church of Scotland
Dr Fransina YOTENI	Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP)

Substitutes

Prof. Raimundo César BARRETO JR	American Baptist Churches USA	Rev. Dr June TOTTEN part time
Rev. James BHAGWAN	Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma	Rev. Dr Meleana Maimoa PULOKA
Rev. Rothangliani CHHANGTE	American Baptist Churches USA	Rev. Dr June TOTTEN part time
Rev. Dr Mauro DE SOUZA	Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil	Dr Thomas Hyeono KANG
Rev. Dr Laszlo GONDA	Reformed Church in Hungary	Bishop Dr Gustáv BÖLCSKEI
Rev. Protopresbyter Dr Nicolas KAZARIAN	Ecumenical Patriarchate	H.E. Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS OF AMERICA
Dr Prawate KHID-ARN	Church of Christ in Thailand	Rev. Sayam MUANGSAK
Évêque Alexis LUKUSA MBUYI	Eglise du Christ - Lumière du Saint Esprit	H.B. Patriarch Jean Baudouin KAYUWA
Rev. Vy NGUYEN	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) USA - Week of Compassion	Rev. Terri Hord OWENS
Dr Andar PARLINDUNGAN	Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP)	Rev. Willem T. P. SIMARMATA
Deacon Dragan RADIĆ	Serbian Orthodox Church	H.G. Bishop IRINEJ OF EASTERN AMERICA
Rev. Dr Thorsten RØRBAEK	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark	Ms Kirsten AUKEN (part time)
Deacon Vladan TATALOVIĆ	Serbian Orthodox Church	Mrs Klaudija MILOSEVSKI
Dr Dianna WRIGHT	Presbyterian Church (USA)	Rev. Dr J. Herbert NELSON II
Rt Rev. Philip WRIGHT	Church in the Province of the West Indies	Mrs Elenor I. LAWRENCE

Replacements

Bishop W. Darin MOORE	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	Rev. Dr Staccato POWELL

Apologies

Most Rev. Dr Phillip ASPINALL	Anglican Church of Australia
Bishop Dr Gustáv BÖLCSKEI	Reformed Church in Hungary
Rev. Augusto CHIPESSE	Igreja Evangélica Congregacional em Angola
Very Rev. Ray COSTER	Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Archpriest Mykola DANYLEVYCH	Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
H.E. Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS OF AMERICA	Ecumenical Patriarchate
Rev. Elder Leatulagi T. FAALEVAO	Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
Rev. Daniel Angel FAVARO	Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina
H.E. Metropolitan GABRIEL OF NEA IONIA AND FILADELFIA	Church of Greece
Rev. Dr Paul GARDNER	Moravian Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands
Madame Conforte HOUENOU BONOU	Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin
Rt Revd Dr Robert INNES	Church of England
H.G. Bishop IRINEJ OF EASTERN AMERICA	Serbian Orthodox Church
H.B. Patriarch JOHN X	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Dr Thomas Hyeono KANG	Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
H.H. Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians KAREKIN II	Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
H.B. Patriarch Jean Baudouin KAYUWA	Eglise du Christ - Lumière du Saint Esprit
Rev. Dr Thang Cin LIAN	Myanmar Baptist Convention
Bishop Dr Alex Gehaz MALASUSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Ms Merenaisi MAOPA	Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma
Rev. Taaroanui MARAEA	Église protestante Maohi
Mr Yilikal Shiferaw MESSELU	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Prof. Dr Pekka METSO	Orthodox Church of Finland
Mrs Klaudija MILOSEVSKI	Serbian Orthodox Church
Rev. Georges MOURAD	National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
Rev. Sayam MUANGSAK	Church of Christ in Thailand
Rev. Dr J. Herbert NELSON II	Presbyterian Church (USA)
H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar NICHOLOVOS	Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
Most Rev. Dr Chibuzo Raphael OPOKO	Methodist Church Nigeria
Rev. Terri Hord OWENS	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States
Rev. Dr Meleana Maimoa PULOKA	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (Methodist Church in Tonga)
Rev. Dr Endor Modeste RAKOTO	Malagasy Lutheran Church
Bishop Rex R. B. REYES, JR.	Episcopal Church in the Philippines
Archbishop Onesphore RWAJE	Province de l'Eglise anglicane du Rwanda
Ms Sheila SALOMO	Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB)
Most Rev. Dr Daniel SARFO	Church of the Province of West Africa
Rev. Willem T. P. SIMARMATA	Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP)
Rev. Dr Michael TITA	Romanian Orthodox Church
Rev. Dr June TOTTEN	American Baptist Churches USA

Ms Sonia TZIOVANNI	Church of Cyprus
Bishop John F. WHITE	African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Dr Emma WHITTICK	Church in Wales
Rev. Dr Kee Sing WONG	Methodist Church in Malaysia

Advisors – Moderators of Commissions

Rev. Frank CHIKANE	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
Metropolitan Dr Mor Geevarghese COORILOS	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
Rev. Dr Susan DURBER	Commission on Faith and Order
Rev. Prof. Rudolf VON SINNER	Commission on Ecumenical Education & Formation

Advisors – New Member Church

Rev. Selby KHUMALO	Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa
Most Rev. Dr Sunday Oludare MATILUKURO	The First African Church Mission (Inc.)
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Rev. Fr Andrzej CHOROMANSKI	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
Rev. Dr Harold D. HUNTER	Pentecostal World Fellowship
H.E. Archbishop Prof. Dr JOB OF TELMESSOS	Ecumenical Patriarchate
Rev. Dr Dirk LANGE	Lutheran World Federation
Rev. Dr Hanns LESSING	World Communion of Reformed Churches
Dr Andrés PACHECO LOZANO	Mennonite World Conference
Commissioner Jane PAONE	Salvation Army
The Most Reverend Prof. Dr Thomas SCHIRRMACHER	World Evangelical Alliance
Ms Janet SCOTT	Friends World Committee for Consultation
Rev. Paul S. TCHÉ	Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC)
Mr Samuel VAN DER MAAS	World Evangelical Alliance
Bishop Rosemarie WENNER	World Methodist Council

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Dr Michel ABS	Middle East Council of Churches
Dr Gail ALLAN	Canadian Council of Churches
Dr Mathews GEORGE CHUNAKARA	Christian Conference of Asia
Dr Antonios KIREOPOULOS	National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
Rev. Dr Fidon MWOMBEKI	All Africa Conference of Churches
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Rev. Viviana PINTO	Latin America Council of Churches

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Rev. Josh BAIRD	United Church of Christ – Wider Church Ministries
Ms Jennifer BENTZEL	Lutheran World Relief
Rev. Dr Owe BOERSMA	Bread for the World
Mr Rudelmar BUENO DE FARIA	Action by Churches Together – ACT Alliance

Ms Dionne GRAVESANDE	Christian Aid
Rev. Dr Jean G. HAWXHURST	United Methodist Church – Council of Bishops
Mr Thomas KEMPER	United Methodist Church – General Board of Global Ministries
Rev. Martin KRIEG	Bread for the World
Rev. Dr Antti LAINE	Finn Church Aid
Ms Anne-Grete LARSEN	Norwegian Church Aid
Mr Lars Ove LJUNGBERG	Act Church of Sweden
Ms Kathryn M. LOHRE	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Global Mission
Rev. Barbara LUND	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Global Mission
Mrs Rommie NAUTA	Kerk in Actie (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
Rev. Dr Japhet NDHLOVU	United Church of Canada - Partners in Mission
Ms Harriett Jane OLSON	United Methodist Women
Rev. Dr Dagmar PRUIN	Bread for the World
Rev. Rolf STEFFANSSON	FELM
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Ms Ann WALLE	Church World Service

Advisors – Youth

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Rev. Sabine UDODESKU	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Rev. Dr Marc WITZENBACHER	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

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Rev. Dr Casely ESSAMUAH	Global Christian Forum
Mr Philip LEE	World Association for Christian Communication - WACC

Advisor – Consensus

Mr Georges LEMOPOULOS	World Council of Churches

Stewards – Bossey Students

Mr Rongliang BIAN	China Christian Council
Mr Peng DU	China Christian Council
Mr Sijo GEORGE	Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar
Mr Giorgi GVELESIANI	Georgian Orthodox Church
Rev. Abel LAMIDO	Methodist Church Nigeria
Ms Sashimongla LONGCHAR	Council of Baptist Churches in North East India

Father Giorgi SARIA	Georgian Orthodox Church
Rev. Jebin THANKARAJ	Church of South India
Ms Chao ZHAI	China Christian Council
Ms Xiaojun ZHAO	China Christian Council

APPENDIX 2 – Moderator's Address

We begin our session today with leadership's sharing landmark developments from and since Busan, South Korea, where the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held. For my part, I would like to offer a couple of comments about some of the landmarks that we have seen along the way. My remarks will be threefold. First, I'll look at the ecumenical movement, in terms of member churches and the wider movement. Second, I will look at some programmatic issues. And third, I look at governance broadly.

From Busan to Karlsruhe

Let's just cast our minds back and remember that we met in Busan, Republic of Korea, on a peninsula that is still divided. Korea was divided after the Second World War and the Korean War. For our next assembly, we are moving to Germany, which was divided also. But, thank God, we celebrate the grace and the mercies of God that we now go back to Germany as a united country, a country that has really served and supported the ecumenical movement.

This particular aspect – geographically, politically, economically – is critical when we look at our theme, "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" and really rethink where our communities are today after many, many conflicts. In terms of the ecumenical movement, particularly the World Council of Churches and its member churches, I like to say that we've seen since Busan and as we move to Karlsruhe a widening and a broadening of an ongoing ecumenical dialogue. We have deepened our bilateral dialogues, which are intercommunion, but we have also broadened the number of groups that we relate to. For instance, in our relationship with the Pentecostal movement and the evangelical movement, we see a much more positive spirit since Busan.

Having said that, let me recollect that in Busan we had a challenge from a small group of evangelicals who were still demonstrating against the WCC as the Antichrist. But, in my opinion, this attitude has actually continued to decline as we have deepened our dialogue with many other groups of Christians. The affirmation from Busan captures what I have just described, and that is: we are committed to move together. We moved together as member churches, and we have moved together with other communions that are not members, like the Catholic Church. And finally, on this particular theme of broadening dialogue, we have seen also a deepening and a much more content-rich interfaith dialogue.

But more importantly, we have moved together with human communities and social movements in addressing issues of justice. Looking again at the Busan motto, we are committed to move together, we can actually go back and see it at work in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has offered us a framework for relating. Busan invited member churches, Christians and people of other faiths, and all men and women of good will, to journey together.

And indeed, during the last eight years, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has given us a strategic direction in terms of facilitating coherence and ensuring that we focused together on issues that are clearly human-based, that truly affect the lives of people. Strategically, the pilgrimage has helped us formulate the basic four or five programmatic objectives of the World Council of Churches which have guided our work.

Programmatic reflections

Let me just lift up several landmarks in our programme work that, for me and from a leadership perspective, present us food for thought and continuity.

First, we have seen since Busan a quite coherent, very active, very strong communication unit within the World Council of Churches, and particularly in social media.

People are able to follow the work not only of the council as an organization but of all communities, member churches, and even non-member churches. And this is because the unit of communication has never before been as strong or as agile in acting. And indeed, it is through this active and very creative communication department that, during this pandemic, we've been able to keep together, to pray together, and to work together. Like so many other organizations, we initially saw to our dismay that the pandemic could almost paralyze the work of the World Council of Churches, so we were so happy that through this department we were able to connect with member churches. We were able to harness stories of hope, stories of resilience, stories of patience, stories of innovation.

And as we meet now and seek to move to the 11th Assembly, I dare say that indeed, in this pandemic the churches have proved their resilience. They have proved the need for and the place of intergenerational support, dialogue and fellowship. Because it was the young people who supported the clergy and who helped the elderly in churches to cope with the new technology in order to keep worshiping and nourishing community. In fact, we have seen that the place of communications technology during this period has been very critical. For all its problems and lop-sidedness, technology has helped to keep the fellowship and the work of the council alive.

A second programmatic area of achievement I wish to highlight is the Just Community of Women and Men. During this period it has lifted up the issue of Thursdays in Black. Fighting rape and gender-based violence, has been a global matter. But the World Council of Churches, through the Thursdays in Black campaign and movement, has been able to bring in other groups (for instance, secular groups that started in America, such as #MeToo) that were working on the same issues of overcoming gender-based violence. Therefore, for me, a programmatic area that stands as a major landmark of this period is the Just Community of Women and Men. It has proved that together men and women can overcome the challenges, the obstacles, the issues that generate unwanted and ugly violence.

Third, I want to lift up the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism from 2018, held in Africa for the first time. Having already addressed the issues of mission from the margins, in Tanzania we reflected on mission and evangelism in relation to transformative discipleship. To us, it was very important that the place of mission and evangelism in the life of the council and in the life of the movement remain strong and appealing. It is through evangelism, through mission that we are able to change the lives of people by their accepting Christ as the Lord and Saviour of their lives. In this change, a new lifestyle is taken up, a new community is formed, a new value system is adopted, and thus transformative discipleship becomes central.

Fourth, we have seen another programmatic area come up recently, and that is overcoming racism and xenophobia. It has emerged again because, despite all the work that has been done in the past, the demons of racism, the demons of xenophobia, the demons of division continue to dog humanity. We realized that there was a wave all over the world that has really woken up racism and xenophobia against certain communities. This is a programmatic priority that the central committee endorsed and that I think is truly important.

Fifth, let me also look at the issues of unity. Several good publications have been issued, recently, so I will not go into detail. But for me what is important is having linked faith and our other work through the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, so that the theology that is now shared with us from the pilgrimage is also reflected in the work of Unity, Faith and Order. To be more specific, I think it is a landmark achievement that the pilgrimage intentionally decided to reflect theologically.

Finally, my comments are not exhaustive of all programmes; but I cannot but mention, as I finish, the place of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey in the formation of future ecumenists and future leaders. Even with the pandemic and then its resurgence, Bossey has been able to function, managing to bring in students from all over the world to overcome the challenges.

Governance during a pandemic

My final point is on governance. The World Council of Church's governance, beginning with the central committee, was of course affected by the pandemic. But, thank God, most people understood the need for us to continue our work online. And the last meeting of the central committee was quite productive online. We have taken decisions online, and for me this points toward a very positive direction. Now of course we are going to meet again online, although we had anticipated meeting in person, and I am sure we will have a fruitful central committee. Executive committee has also conducted its meetings, except for one, online, as has the leadership group.

Now to conclude on governance, through all this and through all the period since Busan, we have seen a spirit of coherence, teamwork, collegiality, and mutual support. I mean, personally, when it comes to the leadership of central committee, I can only say it has been very collegial, very consultative, and very supportive of each other. Together with the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway, who was then our general secretary, and now with the acting general secretary, Father Sauca, we have worked very well. For this I want to thank God, and I wish that the next leadership after Karlsruhe will have the same ambience, the same spirit. I, as a moderator, have been greatly supported by my colleagues, without which it would not have been possible to function.

So looking back from Busan to now, I see that our present assembly theme is so relevant for us now, because the pandemic has divided people. It has exacerbated some of the conflicts that were there. Hence the theme of Christ's love, as it moves us to reconciliation and unity, could not have been more inspired, because to me it is divine, it is timely and it sums up all our programmes.

Thank you so much. Let us meet in Karlsruhe.

APPENDIX 3 – Report of the Acting General Secretary

Welcome and gratitude

Your Eminences, Your Graces, Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, welcome to the second online WCC central committee meeting. I regret we could not meet in person in Geneva as hoped. We thank God for providing another way to meet – to pray together, to share with one another and to move together on our pilgrimage of justice and peace.

I would like to begin with words of gratitude to the leadership of the central committee – to our moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, and to our vice-moderators, His Eminence Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson. Their leadership provides great strength and encouragement. I want also to recognize the members of the executive committee for their accompaniment and wisdom in providing direction.

I am deeply grateful to each one of you here today – to the members of the central committee and our advisors. Your commitment to the WCC fellowship of member churches and the one ecumenical movement is remarkable.

"Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." This is the theme of our meeting and the theme taking us to the assembly in Karlsruhe in just seven months. The theme announces the love of God in Christ for all creation. It speaks to the heart of our faith and the reason for our fellowship. It inspires our common calling to walk, pray and work together for justice and peace – for reconciliation and unity – for renewal and healing.

A story of inspired commitment and resilience

We are living through an extraordinary time together – a time of great loss, a time of physical separation, a time of increased vulnerability and injustice, a time of great change. The commitment and resilience of the churches to continue their ministry and diaconal service to all God's people have been inspiring and transformative.

It continues to amaze me how much we have achieved together as a fellowship of churches in spite of the pandemic. Our governing bodies, committees, commissions, working groups, advisory groups and ecumenical networks have all continued to function with inspired commitment and resilience. We have made this more visible through monthly accountability reports to the central committee and also through new technologies, webinars and other ways of sharing our work and witness with the world.

I am often asked what the WCC has learned during the pandemic. My response has been to reflect on how we have more deeply encountered our shared vulnerability and shared fate as one humanity. We feel more keenly the fragility of human life, indeed, of all life on this planet. The pandemic has not only reinforced the experience of our shared vulnerability, but also our community as human beings, our solidarity across divides and borders, and our capacity for empathy, understanding, and even sacrifice.

Fundamentally, we have learned the real importance of our work as the WCC, grounded in our faith identity, indeed because of it. Our identity as a global Christian fellowship has

enabled us to address this crisis in its deeper cultural and spiritual dimensions, to break barriers and build bridges, and to work relationally with one another.

I believe the pandemic has strengthened the spiritual dimension of our work and our togetherness as a fellowship of churches. It has been important to offer an affirmation of our hope and trust in God, even amid our vulnerability.

In the past, we said that the WCC was a faith-based organization. Now I would describe the WCC as a spiritual-based organization. The heart of our fellowship is the ecumenical spirituality we share, as the flame that fuels our drive for justice and sparks our work for peace. This spiritually inspired work of the WCC has a much broader reach. It aims to achieve the unity of Christians and of all creation and overcome divisions to serve all humanity in its quest for justice and peace.

Over the past two years I have seen how important it is to speak with a spiritual language in WCC statements and speeches, a language that people in the churches can identify with but which is also recognized by people in other faith communities. Despite our different faith identities, when we speak a spiritual language and speak to one another as people of faith, we discover that we have something in common that brings us closer.

On the way to the WCC 11th Assembly

We are on our way to the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe. The assembly will be a milestone in the journey of the churches as they gather together in a spirit of prayer to advance the primary purpose of the WCC as a "fellowship of churches calling one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe."[1]

"Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." The theme of the assembly has become increasingly important in our work. It is deeply theological and deeply spiritual. Not only does it affirm the love of God in Christ for all creation, but it inspires our response as disciples of Christ, following the example of his compassionate and healing love.

The pandemic will not stop us from meeting in Germany. We may have questions about how we will meet, but I am convinced we must meet in Karlsruhe. We have in place the processes needed to monitor the situation, mitigate risks and ensure delegates and others will meet safely. We have strengthened collaboration with our hosts and the German Foreign Ministry to facilitate health and visa requirements.

We can all be inspired by the response of the churches to the central committee invitation to meet in Germany. Nearly 90 percent of the member churches have nominated their delegations. This is unprecedented. It shows the commitment and yearning of the churches to be together.

[1] Purpose and Functions, Article III, WCC Constitution and Rules.

The assembly comes at a time when the world seems more divided than ever, with increasing disparities, increasing racism, increasing populism and increasing violence. The theme of the assembly will encourage the delegates to meet in a spirit of love, calling one another to visible unity in one faith in order that the world may believe.

Our world needs love, reconciliation and unity more than ever. The focus on love and compassion – on reconciliation, unity and healing – in the context of a global pandemic will mark this assembly in the history of the World Council of Churches.

Signs of hope on the way

What gives me hope in times of uncertainty are the life and witness of our member churches. Much of our work is still online, but it has become possible to travel again. I was able to visit many churches in the past months. The attached list of travel, visits and meetings provides an itinerary since the central committee met in June last year.

Every visit is unique and every church is a blessing to our fellowship. I was deeply moved by my visit to Lebanon in December, where I was able to visit our WCC president, His Beatitude John X, primate of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. The people of Beirut in particular have suffered tremendously and I was moved to witness their resilience. I was inspired by His Beatitude's statement that "there is not selection and priority when we try to help; all people are in the image of God and are our brothers and sisters who are waiting for our accompaniment and support."

Also in Lebanon, I met with the Middle East Council of Churches general secretary and staff. The situation in the region is critical. We have all seen the statement of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem on the threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Our newly restructured Jerusalem Liaison Office is monitoring the situation and in cooperation with the local churches continues in a meaningful way our work and presence in the Holy Land. As a fellowship of churches, we must stand in solidarity and act with determination to oppose attacks and incursions by radical groups who seek to destroy the religious and cultural diversity of the region.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with a focus on the Middle East this year, has helped the fellowship deepen its commitment and solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the region. We must continue.

Our work on interreligious dialogue and cooperation has continued and strengthened. The list of visits and events of cooperation with interfaith partners in the attached list speaks for itself. I want just to share shortly about my most recent experience. I just returned to Geneva from a meeting of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity in Dubai. The Higher Committee on Human Fraternity was founded following the signing in February 2019 of the "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Prof. Dr Ahmed Al-Tayeb. Why is this important? Because it brings together representatives from the three Abrahamic faiths and personalities from the secular world. Its whole basis is that we share one humanity. We are all God's children. We come from one family, and we are sisters and brothers despite our differences. The WCC has a high profile in

all such meetings, and its vision and spiritual perspective as a faith-based organization are deeply appreciated.

A strong foundation for our future

As acting general secretary, I have made the assembly a priority because it is the moment when the fellowship will set direction for the future and renew the churches' commitment to unity and common witness in Christ.

My commitment to the fellowship extends beyond the assembly to ensure a strong foundation for my successor and the next central committee. Following the decision of the executive committee during its meeting of November 2021, we have posted openings for three staff leadership positions and announced the search for two new programme directors to lead WCC work on unity, mission, public witness and *diakonia.* We are also recruiting directors for the Faith and Order Commission and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Together with the executive committee, we want to ensure that the WCC secretariat has the skills and experience needed to serve the fellowship in the years to come.

Looking ahead to WCC's long-term future in international Geneva, my commitment to a strong foundation includes providing leadership for the Green Village property development. Since the central committee last met, I am pleased to report that WCC and Implenia have received in November a non-binding offer for the sale of the Kyoto land and project. Kyoto will be the largest building on the estate; its sale is critical to the project and is keenly awaited. The potential investor is one of the major Swiss institutional investors in real estate in Europe. Following some challenges suffered under the pandemic conditions, we trust that now we have a good way forward. Further to the recommendation of the steering committee, executive committee has supported the approach to banks to seek bridging finance for the Kyoto construction, in case this may be required. The reasons and the risks implied, should such a strategy prove necessary, are described in the Green Village Update (GEN FIN 05).

With gratitude for the solidarity of all ecumenical partners, and member churches, I report that the preliminary financial results 2021 present total income of CHF 21.9 million, increased from 2020 (when compared without land sales).With total expenditure at CHF 20.9 million, WCC reports a net increase in funds and reserves of CHF 1 million. While preliminary at this stage, these results also present a solid basis for this year, with general reserves steady, and the opportunity to meet executive committee's guidance concerning the allocation of membership contributions to the assembly fund in our financial closing for 2021.

The work of this central committee will also strengthen our foundation – both spiritually and in terms of the decisions you will make by consensus. Document GEN 05 presents an overview of matters for referral and decisions at this meeting. It will be presented tomorrow by the moderators of our standing committees. I would like to mention a few items.

Before you are a number of important resource documents that reflect the dialogue, consultation and commitment of many years of work. They are resources for the churches, for the assembly and for our pilgrimage of justice and peace together.

Also before you is the report of the working group on constitution and rules. I have worked closely with the group and appreciate their wisdom and experience. Their proposals for revision will strengthen the WCC commitment to the ethos and practice of consensus decision-making.

Also on the agenda is discussion on a draft unity statement. The response of the central committee will encourage further work in anticipation of the assembly unity statement.

Finally, it gives me great joy to report that a consensus has developed in favour of the applications for membership in the WCC of the First African Mission Church (in Nigeria) and the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. Both the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and the executive committee recommend receiving both churches as new members. Receiving new member churches will be a cause for celebration.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the entire WCC staff. Their dedication to the fellowship and their innovations during the pandemic have helped maintain a vibrant fellowship.

When the churches met in Amsterdam in 1948, in the aftermath of World War II, they made the commitment to "stay together." At the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan in the fall of 2013, the churches made the commitment to "move together" on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. Together with the climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a strong and brutal reminder that human beings belong to creation and have been given the mandate to care for it. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and exposed still further existing structural injustice.

The assembly needs to address this situation and speak to the world in clear and direct ways that all may understand. It cannot gloss over the deep, multifaceted civilizational crisis that faces the world. The assembly has the chance to explore how Christ's love opens a horizon of hope. This biblical and theological approach also obliges us to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths and people who have no faith but share the same values as us because they are also members of the same human family assumed in the incarnation.

I pray that as we journey to Karlsruhe and beyond the WCC 11th Assembly, our pilgrimage will continue as a response to God's amazing love for all creation. I pray that the love and compassion of Christ will inspire the churches' commitment to reconciliation and unity, for the whole human family.

APPENDIX 4 – In Memoriam

Mr Biango BUIA, acting assembly secretary of the United Church of Papua New Guinea (UCPNG) passed away on 6 June, 2020. He served as a member of the trustee body of the Council for World Mission and as moderator of the Pacific region. He dedicated 30 years of his working life working for the United Church in PNG in the Church Ministry area of Education and Social Justice in both of which he was very active. He served the UCPNG as Assembly Education Secretary, Assembly Education & Health Secretary, Acting Development Secretary and Manager Partnership and Relations. He was an avid campaigner against gender based violence.

Altbischof Hendrick Frederick from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) died on 15 May 2021 at the age of 80 from complications related to COVID-19. He was the third president and first bishop of the ELCRN, the former Rhenish Mission Church and played a role in Namibia's struggle for independence. Frederick was trained as an evangelist and later attended the Umpumulo Theological Seminary in Natal. As bishop of the ELCRN, prior to Namibia's independence, he was involved in efforts among the country's three sister Lutheran churches to promote greater understanding and cooperation among themselves, which would then lead to a unified church: VELKSWA, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa. He served on several ecumenical bodies: the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), the communion of Lutheran churches.

Reverend Canon Virginia "Ginny" Doctor from the Anglican Church in Canada, died on 26 May 2021. She was a member of the Mohawk Nation Turtle Clan. Early in her career she was the Executive Director for the North American Indian Club of Syracuse after which moved to Alaska where she worked as a missionary in the Village of Tanana. In 2001 she was ordained as an Episcopal priest and stayed in Alaska for 20 years. She later moved to the Six Nations Reserve in Ohsweken, Ontario. She served as the Indigenous Ministry for the Anglican Church of Canada and was heavily involved in the World Council of Churches including as a member of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the working group on transforming discipleship after the Busan Assembly.

Sister Dr Lorelei F. Fuchs SA, known for editing the Growth in Agreement publications, passed away on 17 June 2021 at the age of 70. At age 25, entered the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement. She received a Master of Arts in Theology in 1991 from University of Notre Dame, Indiana, then, a Master of Arts in Theology (MTh) and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL) from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Louvain, Belgium, where she also received her Doctorate degree in Sacred Theology (PhD) in 2003. Her dissertation was entitled: Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations through Dialogue to Symbolic competence for Communionality. In 1991 she worked at the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute (G.E.I.) as an associate director within the Institute. In 1993, it became the G.E.I.I. (Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute). She remained with the Institute until 2006. As an Associate Director of the Institute, Sister served on the National Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, was an associate editor of Ecumenical Trends, and from 1993-2003 was editor of the GEII resource materials for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian

Unity. She also staffed the Institute's LARC Desk (Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic relations). She wrote numerous articles and gave presentations throughout the United States and also at the Centro Pro Unione in Rome.

Most Rev. Fereimi Cama, bishop of Polynesia and primate of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa-New Zealand, passed away on 2 July 2021. He was instrumental in opening the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral—of which he was dean—as a venue to pray for the hostages in a 2000 Fiji coup. Despite the dangers associated with his actions, he offered to take communion to the hostages in an act of selflessness. He was a trustee of the Pacific Conference of Churches. He was known for his commitment and advocacy on issues of climate change, youth, and women. Known for encouraging unity and a teacher by profession, he also worked to ensure that the young people of the Pacific took a leadership role in the fight against climate change.

Rev. Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela from the African Presbyterian Church in South Africa passed away the morning of 5 July 2021 due to COVID-19. She was the executive director of INERELA+ (the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV) and one of its founding members and the first woman faith leader speaking openly about her HIV status. She was co-moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance HIV Campaign Strategy Group and a member of the International Reference Group of WCC Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy, member of the Faith Advisory Council to the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and a member of the SANAC Legal and Human Rights Task Team. She guided many organisations as a board member and advisor, including Ujamaa Centre for Community Research, Inclusive and Affirming Ministries, We Will Speak Out SA, and GIN-SSOGIE. She was also a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

Rev. Willem Maloali, of the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua-Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP) passed away on the 8 of July at 86 years of age. He was a pioneer in accompanying the development and establishment of the autonomous Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua, from 1956, in the context of the 166-year mission history. As the leader of the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua synod, he ensured that the church carried the people's burden in the domains of human rights and politics. In the church, he devoted himself to developing theology, evangelism, and mission. He strived to create opportunities for education, including a system of schools, invested in the building of self-reliant institutions and mentored many leaders across generations. He was also deeply engaged in developing the broader ecumenical movement and contributed to forming two vital regional ecumenical organisations, the Pacific Theological College and the Pacific Council of Churches.

His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, the Supreme Head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India, passed away at the age of 74 on 12 July 2021. He was an unassuming ecclesiastical leader and was always concerned about the poor and the needy in society. He was a distinguished representative of Indian Christians, and a voice on their behalf in the wider social milieu. He was ordained as a priest in 1973 and consecrated as a bishop in 1985. Following the abdication of his predecessor His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Didymus I, he was enthroned on 1 November 2010 with the name Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, thereby becoming the Catholicos of the East. In the past years he took a special interest in enhancing

bilateral relations with heads of various Orthodox churches in other parts of the world such as the Ethiopian, Armenian, and Russian Orthodox churches, as well as with the Roman Catholic Church.

Rev. Dr Godefroid Kangudie Tshibemba (Kä Mana) passed away on 19 July 2021. An African theologian and writer from the Democratic Republic of Congo, he was one of the first among theologians to accompany the WCC Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy Programme in West Africa Regional Office in publication while he was based in the University of West Africa UPAO. His critical reflections were transformative in shaping the work within the ecumenical world. He studied in the seminary for Catholic priests in Mbuji-Mayi, then choosing the religious life in the congregation of the Josephite Fathers. He later continued his studies at the Gregorian University in Rome, then at the University of Strasbourg and the Free University of Brussels, earning doctoral degrees in philosophy and theology.

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, former member of the World Council of Churches central committee fell asleep in the Lord on the evening of 3 August. Fr Leonid was long time director of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) Office of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations. After undergraduate studies in history and political science at the University of Southern California, he studied at St. Vladimir's Seminary and was ordained a priest in 1969. During his career, he also served as editor of The Orthodox Church, the OCA main periodical, as the first Orthodox president of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, moderator of Religions for Peace (international) and Religions for Peace USA, moderator of Christian Churches Together in the USA, and served on the board of directors of International Orthodox Christian Charities. He generously shared his skills of bridge builder, participating in important processes in the life and history of the WCC such as the drafting of the policy statement "Common understanding and vision of the WCC" and the Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC. He dedicated himself to building up a welcoming Orthodox Christian community which embodied love of God and love of neighbour.

Dr Bennet Benjamin, an Indian ecumenist known for building of pathways of justice and dignity for people in the margins, passed away on 4 August 2021 at the age of 77. Son of a pastor, he grew up in many places, wherever his parents moved for mission work. After his university, at which he studied cultural history of India and politics, he began his work in the field of cottage industries, researching through field studies. He worked as a programme secretary for the Student Christian Movement in India. He joined the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society and the Ecumenical Christian Centre, leaving Bangalore to move to Tirupattur, where he developed his work among the indigenous people. He founded and directed the Centre for Rural Health and Social Education. He also contributed significantly to the ecumenical movement, including the World Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia, National Council of Churches in India, and YMCAs of India. He wrote frequently in journals, and other publications through which he influenced social thinking, questions of development, human rights, inter-cultural studies, labour issues, and youth work.

Rev. Dr Suzanne Webb, from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States passed away on 13 August 2021. She served on the Christian Church Foundation Board of Directors from 2007 to 2015, ending her term as the Chair of the Board. She also served on

various ecumenical committees and commissions locally, nationally, and internationally including as a member of the National Benevolent Association board of trustees (2013-2017).

Rev. Cho Yong-gi, founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, died 14 September 2021. He was 85. He was pastor emeritus of the world's largest congregation. In 1956, he entered a Full Gospel college in Seoul to study theology. After graduating in 1958, he opened a tent church in northwestern Seoul, which later moved to Yeouido, a financial district in the capital, and became Yoido Full Gospel Church with more than 700,000 followers. He established the newspaper Kookmin Daily in 1988 and set up Good People, an international nongovernment development organization for human rights, environment and child welfare. He contributed to the Busan assembly planning process and encouraged his congregants to participate in the assembly in 2013.

Rev. Dr Timothy Stewart, the president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention died at the age of 64 on 17 September 2021. Having been called to the ministry at age 25, he became one of the longest serving pastors of the oldest Baptist church in The Bahamas, providing food (over 30,000 meals per year), clothing, counselling, educational development opportunities and other important human services to the working class communities. He became first ever non-American to ascend to president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Rev. Dr Jose Pepito Manansala Cunanan, ordained minister of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines and environmental activist, died on 12 October 2021. After finishing his degree in anthropology from the University of the Philippines, he received further degrees in theology and his Doctor of Ministry from the Union Theological Seminary and Philippine Christian University. He served as secretary of the Urban Rural Mission Programme at the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1986-1989 and executive director of the Commission on Development and Social Concerns at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines from 1990-93. Dr Cunanan was a member of WCC delegations to the Rio Earth Summit in Brazil and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York. He participated at conferences and training courses around the world. He has published many articles and, on the radio, spoke often on agriculture, environmental issues and development.

Rev. Dr Stephen Suleeman, an ordained minister in the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) and noted theological educator and professor of the Jakarta Theological Seminary, passed away on 8 November 2021. He completed his Doctorandus in Social Sciences in 1987 from the University of Indonesia and began his academic career at the Jakarta Theological Seminary that same year, teaching there for 27 years. He. He also held two Masters' degrees in Theology in Peace Studies (1991) and History and Christian Thought (1992). He was responsible for introducing sexuality studies in the formal education and training of new pastors and theologians in Jakarta, also coordinating the Field Education Programme that sent students to interact with LGBTQI communities in order to better understand them and promote inclusion in churches. His ecumenical work included involvement with the Christian Communion of Indonesia (PGI) and with the Christian Conference of Asia's HIV and AIDS programmes, contributing during study sessions on gender and sexuality as well as his participation at various theological summits of the CCA's Congress of Asian Theologians

(CATS), including most recently the CATS–IX held in 2019. He contributed to the work of the World Council of Churches as a member of the reference group on human sexuality.

Rev. Jose Manuel Leite, ordained minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal, passed away in November 2021. He served as an executive staff member of the Conference of European Churches, as president of Portuguese Council of Christian Churches (COPIC), , and as a representative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the UN Commission on Human Rights. Having studied at the WCC Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, he was later responsible for the rectory and the disciplines of Ecumenism and Patristics of the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Lisbon. As Mayor of Figueira da Foz, his gifts further enriched the community there.

Rev. Zwinglio Mota Dias, pastor, theologian and ecumenist from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, died on 19 November 2021, after battling cancer. For many years he was a member of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. He was actively engaged in the work of Urban Rural Mission, a mission-based programme that promoted and coordinated contextual people-centred responses to the degradation of labour and other issues of human dignity and community life in urban-industrial and rural contexts. He was the moderator of Urban Rural Mission's Advisory Group between 1985 and 1992. He participated in the establishment of a Center for Ecumenical Information (CEI), of which he would later be the general secretary until 1994. CEI, later known as CEDI, continues its activities today as Koinonia Presença Ecumênica e Serviço. He also served as a professor of the Department of Sciences of Religion of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil, where he taught and supervised advanced research topics related to Protestantism and ecumenism. He was visiting professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, in Chicago, USA, and at Emmanuel College of the Victory University, in Toronto, Canada.

Dr Ibraheem Garba, co-director of International Centre for Interfaith Peace and Harmony in Nigeria, died in a car accident in December 2021. Since April 2020, Garba had been co-director of the centre, which was established in 2016 with the support of the WCC, working with local and international Christian and Muslim partners. He was deeply committed to improving the lives of the people of Nigeria, both Muslim and Christian.

Ms Hildegard Zumach, member of the Evangelical Church in Germany, and former general secretary of the Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Germany, passed away on 15 December 2021 at the age of 95. She was a church musician, long-time general secretary of the Evangelical Women's Work in Germany (1972-1992) and was the first woman to chair the Action Group Service for Peace (AGDF) board of directors (1992-1996), where she shared her wealth of experience in political commitment to women's rights, in solidarity work against apartheid in South Africa, in global ecumenism. She was part of the six-strong EKD delegation to the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee and attended the WCC assemblies in Nairobi (1975), Vancouver (1983) and Canberra (1991). In 1979 she was one of the co-founders of the "Plea for an Ecumenical Future", which is committed to the "Conciliar Process for Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation" founded in Vancouver. Her ecumenical commitment also included the founding of the German Committee of the World Day of Prayer for Women in the early 1970s, of which Zumach chaired until 1982. She supported feminist theology and

advocated for theological research by women. This was particularly evident in the context of the ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998).

Rev. Illesa Naivalu, general secretary of the Methodist Church of Fiji passed away on 17 December 2021 following a period of ill health. He had attended the 2018 General Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches in Auckland, Aotearoa-New Zealand in his capacity then as general secretary of the Fiji Council of Churches. He had previously served as the secretary for Christian Citizenship and Social Services for the Methodist Church in Fiji as well as on mission as a diaspora minister in Melbourne, Australia through the Uniting Church in Australia.

Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, a key leader in the moral struggle against the apartheid system in South Africa, died on 30 December 2021 at the age of 90. Ordained in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the impact of his life's ministry and witness extended far beyond the borders of his own country and church communion.

He served as WCC programme executive (1972-1975) in the WCC Theological Education Fund in London working on the promotion of theological education focused on the needs of churches and congregations in the "Third World". This was the origin of the de-colonial notion of "contextualization". Upon his return to South Africa, he was appointed dean of Johannesburg in 1975 and one year later Anglican bishop of Lesotho, then general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and finally the first black Archbishop of Cape Town (1987). A powerful and forthright voice against injustice, after the fall of Apartheid, he was named Tutu was chairperson of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

He spoke at the Vancouver Assembly (1983), the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1993), the Porto Alegre Assembly (2006). In a visit to the Ecumenical Centre in 2008, Tutu thanked the WCC for its "costly solidarity" at the time of the anti-apartheid struggle. "We would not be free had not been for the steadfast support of the WCC, which cost the WCC a very great deal," he said. Archbishop Tutu's impact on the life of the ecumenical movement and on the work of the WCC was pivotal.

Rev. Khamphone Kounthapanya, Executive President of the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), died on 3 January 2022. He was a charismatic Asian church leader, committed ecumenist and a renowned biblical scholar and Christian educator. As a committed and patriotic Christian leader in Lao, PDR one of the last remaining communist countries in the world, he was revered and admired by people at large. He served the church in different capacities as a pastor, theological educator, Bible school teacher, general secretary; and finally as the executive president of the LEC, he was instrumental in rebuilding the foundations of a totally ruined Christian Church in Lao PDR. His vision was to train a new generation of theologically trained pastors and church workers and through them to preach the gospel. An informal theological education training programme was initiated in 1994 with the support of CCA and WCC Indo-China programme. He was very keen that the LEC be part of the mainstream Asian and global ecumenical movement and used every opportunity to be part of Asian and global ecumenical events.

Prof. George Koshy, senior lay church and ecumenical leader in India, passed away on 15 January 2022 after a brief illness at the age of 90. He was former general secretary of the Church of South India (CSI) for four consecutive terms from 1990-1998. A renowned professor of English, he joined the CMS College in Kottayam in 1956 as a teacher of English Language and Literature, and became professor and head of the department, as well as the Vice Principal. He took early retirement from his full-time professorship and became actively involved in the CSI Synod leadership and the global ecumenical movement, starting from 1990. In addition to being a member of the WCC central committee (1991-1998), he also served as the vice-chairman of the International Council of Anglican Churches, executive committee member of the Council for World Mission London, World Methodist Council, Evangelical Mission in South-West Germany, and National Council of Churches in India. He had also become the Regional Director of Y's Men International, South West India Region. He was a delegate of the CSI to the 10th General Assembly of the CCA held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1995.

Dr John Taylor, from the Church of England, former head of the WCC interreligious office died in January 2022. He attended the WCC New Delhi Assembly in 1961 as a student observer. He studied and taught Islamics at Cambridge University (England), University of Punjab (PakistanI), McGill University (Canada), University of Birmingham (England), and Harvard University. He served WCC as programme secretary for Christian-Muslim relations, headed up the programme (1980-83) and later served WCC as a consultant in interfaith relations. After his time at the WCC he went on to be secretary general of Religions for Peace and, in the 1990s, was involved in peacekeeping initiatives in the Balkans with his work for the Conference of European Churches. He also helped support the 9th WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre in 2006.

Rev. Philemon Riti OBE, former moderator of the Pacific Conference of Churches, died in February 2022. As an ordained minister in the United Church of the Solomon Islands and later moderator of the UCSI (2002-2007), he never hesitated to speak truth to and challenge the systems he felt caused harm to God's people. He was instrumental with Bishop Ellison Pogo of the Anglican Church of Melanesia in forging closer links between the clergy of the UCSI and ACOM. He also served as the general secretary of the council of churches to bring about an end to ethnic tensions by fostering reconciliation in the country. He was nominated to the post of Governor-General, appointed to the Law Reform Commission and the Parole Board in recognition of his strong sense of justice.

APPENDIX 5 – Assembly Leadership

I. Leadership of Assembly Committees

Finance Committee

- Moderator – Ms Lara Setrakian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin])
- Rapporteur – Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley (Jamaica Baptist Union)

Nominations Committee

- Moderator – Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East)
- Rapporteur – Bishop Rex R.B. Reyes (Episcopal Church in the Philippines)

Message Committee

- Moderator – Rt. Rev. Dr Gregory Cameron (Church in Wales)
- Rapporteur – Rev. Lucy Waweru (Presbyterian Church of East Africa)

Policy Reference Committee

- Moderator – Metropolitan Dr Vasilios of Constantia (Church of Cyprus)
- Rapporteur – Rev. Dr Ge Wen (China Christian Council)

Programme Guidelines Committee

- Moderator – Rev. Karin van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
- Rapporteur – Rev. Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ, USA)

Public Issues Committee

- Moderator – Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church)
- Rapporteur – Dr Nora Bayrakdarian-Kabakian (Armenian Apostolic Church Holy See of Cilicia)

Balances – 5 men, 7 women, 4 orthodox (33%), AF (1), AS (2), CA (1) EU (4), ME (2) NA (2). Church traditions: Anglican (2), Baptist (1), Eastern Orthodox (3), Oriental Orthodox (2), Post-Denominational (1), Reformed (1) United (2).

II. Assembly Consensus Facilitation Team

Team members

- Mr Juan Chavez (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bolivia) – Bossey Graduate, member of the Ecumenical Indigenous Persons Network. Around 30 years old.
- Ms Emily Evans (Uniting Church in Australia) – outgoing member of the executive and central committees, member of ECHOS Commission.
- Mrs Celina Falk (Church of Sweden) – delegate, outgoing member of the central committee, observer/advisor to the working group on constitution and rules, member of ECHOS Commission.

Consultant

- Mr Georges Lemopoulos (Ecumenical Patriarchate) – currently serving as WCC consensus consultant.

III. Draft Ecumenical Conversations Leadership Profile

EC 1 Mission Reimagined: Transforming Disciples Challenging Empire

Moderator

H.E. Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Church, Orthodox Oriental, Europe, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Rev. Dr Catherine McLean, United Church of Canada, United and Uniting, North America, Ordained, Female

EC 2 Dreaming a New Future: A Call from the Margins

Moderator

Ms. Jingqin Gu, China Christian Council, Post Denominational, Asia, Lay, Female

Rapporteur

Ms Cindy Vanuaroro, Vanuatu Presbyterian Church, Reformed, Pacific, Lay, Female, Indigenous

EC 3 Walking Together Hand in Hand: Evangelism and Justice – exploring theology and practice for mission and evangelism in an unjust world

Moderator

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou, Church of Greece, Orthodox Eastern, Europe, Lay, Female

Rapporteur

Rev. Dr Jennifer S. Leath, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist, North America, Ordained, Female

EC 4 The Gift of Being: A Church of All and For All – inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in ministry and mission

Moderator

Rev. Dr Gordon Cowans, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, United and Uniting, Caribbean, Ordained Male, EDAN

Rapporteur

Ms Cassandra Ann Granados, United Church of Christ, United and Uniting, North America, Lay Female, Youth, EDAN

EC 5 Creation and Common Prayer

Moderator

Very Rev. Anne Mills, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, Anglican, Asia, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur

Fr Aswin Zefrin Fernandis, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Orthodox Oriental, Asia, Ordained, Male

EC 6 Broadening the Dialogue on the Church

Moderator

Rev. Dr Mauro Batista De Souza, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, Lutheran, Latin America, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Dr Akheto Sema, Council of Baptist Churches in North East India, Baptist, Asia, Ordained Male, Indigenous

EC 7 Creation Justice Now! Climate Action and Water for Life

Moderator

Most Rev. Dr Antje Jackelén, Church of Sweden, Lutheran, Europe, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur

Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), Orthodox Oriental, Europe, Lay, Female

EC 8 Who lives, who dies, who cares?: The churches' role in health and healing today

Moderator

Rev. Teyi Godbeda Lawson, Kpavuvu Eglise Methodiste du Togo, Methodist, Africa, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Ms Sara Newland-Martin, Jamaica Baptist Union, Baptist, Caribbean, Lay, Female, EDAN

EC 9 Economy of Life in a time of inequality, persistent hunger, climate change and the 4th industrial revolution

Moderator

Rev. Dora Ester Arce Valentin, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformeda en Cuba, Reformed, Caribbean, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur

Rev. Jenne Pieter, Gereka Protestan Maluku (GPM), Reformed, Asia, Ordained, Female

EC 10 Ecumenical Diakonia – building bridges: local action by churches together

Moderator

Rev. Ebenezer W.P. Joseph, Methodist Church, Sri Lanka, Methodist, Asia, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Rev. Dr Gunilla Hallonsten, Church of Sweden, Lutheran, Europe, Ordained, Female

EC 11 Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to journey together on matters of human sexuality

Moderator

Rev. Silishebo Silishebo, United Church of Zambia, United and Uniting Churches, Zambia, Africa, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Rev. Marianne Brekken, Church of Norway, Lutheran, Europe, Ordained, Female

EC 12 Trends and emerging issues in a rapidly changing world

Moderator

H.E. Archbishop Prof. Dr Job of Telmessos, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Orthodox Eastern, Europe, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Rev. Dr Billy Gama, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod, Reformed, Africa, Ordained, Male

EC 13 Towards a Just Peace in the Middle East

Moderator

Dr Audeh Quawas, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Orthodox Eastern, Middle East, Lay, Male

Rapporteur

Rev. Joseph Majd Kasaab, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, Reformed, Middle East, Ordained, Male

EC 14 Ecumenical Call to Just Peace: Holistic approaches to peacebuilding

Moderator

Rev. Dr Yonas Yigezu Dibisa, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Lutheran, Africa, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur

Most Rev. Dr Jackson Ole Sapit, Anglican Church of Kenya, Anglican, Africa, Ordained, Male

EC 15 Freedom of Religion and Belief: The Church and Others in the Face of Religious Discrimination and Oppression

Moderator

Rev. Dr Elfriede Dörr, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Lutheran, Europe, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur

Rev. Tara Tautari, Methodist Church of New Zealand, Methodist, Asia, Ordained, Female, Indigenous

EC 16 Together Towards Racial Justice: Confronting and Dismantling the Enduring Legacy of Slavery and Colonialism in a Time of Increasing Populism and Xenophobia

Moderator

Rev. Dr Angelique Walker-Smith, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., USA, Baptist, North America, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur

Rev. Dr Gustav Claassen, Dutch Reformed Church, Reformed, Africa, Ordained, Male

EC 17 Exile, Exodus and Hospitality: Human Mobility, Displacement and the Public Role and Witness of the Church

Moderator

Rt Rev. Joy Abdul-Mohan Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean, Reformed, Caribbean, Ordained, Female

Rapporteur
Ms Karen Campbell, United Reformed Church, United Kingdom, United and Uniting Churches, Europe, Lay, Female

EC 18 Interreligious Solidarity as Interreligious Engagement
Moderator
Prof. Dr George Tamer, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Orthodox Eastern, Europe, Lay, Male, EDAN
Rapporteur
Ms Kathryn Lohre, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran, North America, Lay, Female

EC 19 Theological Education - Why its Ecumenicity is Essential
Moderator
Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Eastern, Europe
Rapporteur
Rev. Dr Manhong Lin, China Christian Council, Post Denominational, Asia, Ordained, Female

EC 20 Minding the Gaps: A Gender Justice Approach to Reconciliation and Unity
Moderator
Bishop Elizabeth L. Eaton, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran, North America, Ordained, Female
Rapporteur
Ms Ruth Mathen, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Orthodox Oriental, Asia, Lay, Female, Youth

EC 21 Christian Ethics and Human Rights
Moderator
Dr Nigussu Legesse, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Orthodox Oriental, Africa, Lay, Male
Rapporteur
Rev. Sarah Moore, United Reformed Church, United and Uniting, Europe, Ordained, Female

EC 22 Churches and moral discernment. Facilitating dialogue to build koinonia
Moderator
Rev. Dr Pascal Bataringaya, Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda, Reformed, Africa, Ordained Male
Rapporteur
Ms Kristina Mantasasvili, Ecumenical Patriarchate Orthodox Eastern, Europe, Lay, Female

EC 23 Inspired by the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – Moving together by the Love of Christ
Moderator
Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, Historic Peace Churches and Moravians, Europe, Ordained, Male

Rapporteur
H. E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, Orthodox Eastern, Africa, Ordained, Male

Balances

Male: 20	Orthodox: 12 (26%)
Female: 25	Youth: 2
Ordained: 33	EDAN: 4
Lay: 14	Indigenous People: 3

Regions
Africa: 9, Asia: 10, Caribbean: 4, Europe: 14, Latin America: 1, Middle East: 2, North America: 7, Pacific: 1

Church Families
Anglican: 2, Baptist: 3, Lutheran: 8, Methodist: 4, Orthodox Eastern: 7, Orthodox Oriental: 5, Historic Peace Churches and Moravians: 1, Post Denominational: 2, Reformed: 10, United & Uniting: 6

APPENDIX 6 – Email to the Programme Committee

From: Theodora Issa
Sent: 14 February 2022 13:12
To: Bosse-Huber, Petra; Christ-Taha Catherine; WCC Programme Guidelines Committee; Karin van den Broeke
Cc: Jack Khalil; Hayr Hrant
Subject: Comments on the Programme Committee Draft Report - 13Feb2022 FINAL VERSION

FINAL VERSION

Esteemed Moderator,
First, allow us to thank you for leading the Programme Committee during Friday and Saturday of the February 2022 Central Committee meeting. It was no easy task to go through all the material in such a short time and on a virtual platform.

We received the **draft report of the Programme Committee** yesterday by email and were asked to send our comments latest today by 17:00 Geneva time. In this regard, as Central Committee members, we are writing this email to express a few concerns. As it is known, each central committee member participates not in a personal capacity but **represents their church and wider communion.**

We share the following concerns as Orthodox Church representatives because we are well aware that when the documents reach the plenary tomorrow, or our churches in the future, these are the issues that will be raised. We are also aware that if a proper in-person meeting would have taken place, members from various churches would have the adequate time to communicate with each other and offer their shared concerns. In other words, we are aware that what we will be sharing here is not solely the view of Orthodox members, and we also hope that in the spirit of ecumenism, even those that do not hold the same convictions, will nevertheless agree with the circumstance these issues arise under.

The main and first document under scrutiny is **GEN PRO 03.1,** even though some of the points also apply in general.

- **First, is the issue of time.**

When GEN PRO 03.1 was first presented to the Programme Committee on Friday, Rev. Dr Harold Hunter took the opportunity to express his concern with the fact that this document was shared with the PC very late, and considering it is a lengthy document (79 pages and over 55,000 words), the PC members were not given sufficient time to review it. Such sensitive topics require serious dedication to read, review, and scrutinize- each from within their own tradition, and all from our common Bible. We noticed that the document failed to offer the **biblical teaching** on this issue. Finally, **time and prayer** are required to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our effort to guide the faithful entrusted to us.

• **Second, GEN PRO 03.1 is a sensitive document.**
Rev. Dr Harold Hunter also stressed that this is a **sensitive document** and expressed his concern that it has often become the reason many churches do not join or in some cases might leave the ecumenical movement. **We share this concern.**
The PC report reads: "The programme committee is aware that human sexuality could be a divisive topic in churches and in our fellowship. The committee underlines the importance for ecumenical dialogue in a safe space on topics that could be divisive and welcomes the invitation in this document to journey together in ethical dilemmas." **We also share this general consensus**, that human sexuality is a divisive topic, and also that a safe space for ecumenical dialogue is important. But a safe space can be created only if all members feel they have the comfort and time to address each topic, and not see documents rushed through processes.

• **Third, building on the previous sentence of processes,** there is also a point of order in regard to the PC's responsibilities and rights.

This issue was also present at the last online CC meeting, and although an attempt was made on Saturday to offer clarification, a clear consensus was not shared from the leadership. Our Deputy GS, Prof. Dr Isabel was invited to explain what the terminology "receives as a resource document" means and its implications. Unfortunately, once again, a clear and conclusive explanation has not been offered to remove all confusion from the members' understanding. For example, after the Deputy GS's explanation, the following comment was written in the chat box: "*From Yonas DIBISA, EECMY, ETHIOPIA to Everyone 03:19 PM As far as experiences go, some churches do use the word "receive" as a document that has been accepted in principle but not decisive yet."* Dr Isabel also admitted that it was not clear in the WCC guidelines whether a member could abstain or stand-aside, a suggestion that was made the previous day. Nevertheless, our Moderator suggested that we apply this option for those wanting to do so. This creates numerous challenges. Our council is based on the concept of consensus, this new method seems to be implying that documents can be approved without consensus.

Furthermore, we understand that while being sensitive topics, for many churches these are also priority topics. During our deliberations it was stressed a few times that many member churches are hoping to have an ecumenical document to guide them, and this we also fully appreciate and also hope to have. **But what is being offered here is not an ecumenical document,** at least at this stage of its redaction since all member churches are not in agreement. **This defeats the purpose of trying to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality.**

• **Fourth, the PC "thanks the Reference Group on Human Sexuality on the work done."**
We reiterate this sentence, as it is no easy feat to address these matters and prepare such a lengthy document. On the other hand, we noticed that the various topics on sexuality that are addressed in the document are too convoluted for it to be truly a document that can be used. Although we have not had the opportunity to read the whole document, **it is nevertheless clear that an overall rewording is required.** Besides, each specific topic related to sexuality, minority groups and sexual violence, needs to be addressed in a specific section dedicated to it.

• **Finally, if time were on our side, we would have offered further clarification and even examples from the document.**

We hope that the above concerns are clear and will eventually be of assistance in these Conversations on the Pilgrim Way. We still have much work to do in order to reach a truly ecumenical resource on matters of human sexuality. We are nevertheless hopeful that with continued effort this can be realized.

Madame Moderator, as you mentioned during the meeting, any suggestions, concerns, and people standing by, would be added to the report; So, we are sending this email before the deadline at 17:00, and hope to see it alongside the report.

Once again Madame Moderator we thank you for your leadership and taking the time to look into this.

Prof. Dr Very Rev. Jack Khalil, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East,
Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian, Armenian Apostolic Church, Holy See of Cilicia,
Dr Theodora Issa, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East.